



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
INSTITUTIONEN FÖR SOCIALT ARBETE

University of Gothenburg
Department of Social Work



Problematic school absenteeism for adolescents with ESSENCE;

A qualitative study on what is described as
helpful in getting the young people back to school.

Psychotherapy Programme with a focus on family and systemic-oriented psychotherapy.

Master's thesis, 15 ECTS credits, spring 2023

Authors: Susanne Andersson and Maryam Fetrak

Supervisor: Karin Thorslund

We want our study to be inspired by: "A curiosity about the world of which we ourselves are a part" (Bateson, 1972).

1. Abstract

The background to the study was that students who fit under the ESSENCE concept are overrepresented in problematic school absenteeism (Munkhaugen 2018). ESSENCE stands for Early Symptomatic Syndromes Eliciting Neurodevelopmental Clinical Examinations and is an umbrella term for neuropsychiatric developmental disorders without a diagnosis (Gillberg 2018). The study used Kearney's definition of problematic school absenteeism where the student is absent for at least 25% of the school time for at least two weeks (Kearney, 2001). The purpose of the study was to investigate what families, an attendance team in Stenungsund and staff at a school described as helpful in getting students with ESSENCE back to school or to a learning experience.

The study used a systemic and network-based theoretical perspective. This means that problems do not exist inside the individual, but between them in interaction. This perspective was deepened in a social constructionist approach, which means that these interactions are in constant motion. The theoretical perspective also included a network perspective, where a problem cannot be considered separately from those involved.

The method was interviews. Four staff members were interviewed from a school in a focus group, two staff members from an attendance team were interviewed and three families, a total of thirteen individuals. The attendance team that was interviewed works network-based and systemically with students with problematic school absences that fall under the concept of ESSENCE. The study was analyzed thematically. In response to our question, the study resulted in six recurring themes; Key to change, Resilient relationships over time, Simultaneous parallel work between all concerned, Salutogenic identity, Being brave and Flexibility in time and space. Strengthened by previous research, the study resulted in the fact that the content of the six themes may be helpful in getting students with ESSENCE back to school or learning.

Key: School refusal or absence or attendance. ESSENCE, developmental disorders.

2. Table of contents

1. Abstract.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
2. Table of contents.....	1
3. Preface.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
4. Introduction.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
5. Previous research	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
5.1 Research on problematic school absenteeism and Autism or ADHD.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
5.2 Research linked to ESSENCE	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
5.3 Research on how to prevent school absenteeism	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
5.4 Research on how to treat problematic school absenteeism or how to get students back to school	8
6. Theoretical perspective	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
6.1 Systemic and Social Constructionist Perspectives.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.

6.2 Network-based perspective and open conversations.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
7. Aim and research questions	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
8. Method	11
8.1 Selection.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
8.2 Data collection	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
8.2.1 Question Guide	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
8.3 Processing and analysis method.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
8.3.1 Reflexive thematic analysis	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
8.4 Generalizability.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
8.5 Credibility (Reliability).....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
8.6 Ethical considerations	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9. Results and analysis	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.1 The key to change	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.1.1 Abandonment and loneliness create a longing for connection.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.1.2 Powerlessness creates anger and a drive to change	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.2 Resilient relationships over time.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.2.1 Caring contacts.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.2.2 Meaningful continuity.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.3 At the same time, parallel work between all the concerned.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.3.1 Focused collaboration	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.3.2 Common understanding	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.4 Salutogenic identity	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.4.1 Enabling identity of professionals.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.4.2 Transforming Identity in Relationship with Families	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.5 Being brave	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.5.1 Daring something new	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.5.2 Go Outside the Laws.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.5.3 Commitment outside the assignment	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.6 Flexibility in time and space regarding interventions between systems	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.6.1 Interventions that need to be taken care of urgently and in the right place	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
9.6.2 Efforts that need time to generate positive change	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
10. Summary analysis and discussion.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
10.1 Final discussion.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.

10.2 Method discussion	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
10.3 Continued research.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
List of references	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
Appendix 1 Parent questionnaires.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
Appendix 2 Interview Questions.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
Appendix 3 Consent Letter	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.

3. Foreword

The authors who wrote this essay are studying at the psychotherapist programme with a focus on Family and Systemic-oriented Psychotherapy. In addition to this, we work at the Child and Adolescent Habilitation's autism team in Region Kronoberg and at Young People's Mental Health in the City of Gothenburg. This interest began with the hundreds of hour-long meetings and phone calls with families that we come into contact with on a daily basis through our respective jobs. Dedicating this essay to examining the social phenomenon of "problematic school absenteeism" crystallized early in our discussions. Adolescents with neuropsychiatric difficulties were particularly affected, which is why this essay is dedicated to this group. Our experience is that the problem with children who, for various reasons, do not come away to school or children who have had longer school absences evoke strong feelings in parents but also in us professionals who are expected to come up with good ideas for solutions to the situation. Research shows that problematic school absenteeism is not a limited phenomenon that affects certain family constellations or social classes. The negative consequences do not only attack the child and their relatives. The consequences also affect the school system and society suffers. We therefore found this topic important to highlight, precisely from a psychotherapeutic, systemic perspective.

We feel great gratitude and humility in relation to our informants, for your time and your commitment as well as your valuable life experiences. Thank you for your stories and feelings and sharing them with us. This made this essay possible.

We would also like to thank those closest to us who have put up with us during this time. I would like to thank each other for the hard work and trust in doing this together.

We would also like to extend a big thank you to our supervisor Karin Thorslund for your support, commitment and for your keen eye for how this must be done.

4. Introduction

The overall research shows that school attendance or learning is important for children and young people. A summary of a total of 3,213 publications on school absenteeism and its consequences found that school absenteeism is researched in disciplines such as pedagogy, psychology, social work, medicine, nursing, sociology and criminal justice. The results of this research have links to anxiety and depression, social isolation, internalization

and externalization of behavioral problems, contact with the legal system, and long-term problems in adulthood that include psychiatric, occupational, and marital problems, as well as economic deprivation. School absenteeism and early school leaving are considered critical public health issues (Heyne et al., 2020).

To get some perspective on what school absenteeism looks like in Sweden, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate has measured continuous absences that last for a month or more. The report found that 1,700 pupils had continuous school absences in the country. At the same time, 18,000 pupils had repeated occasional absences. (Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2016).

The studies above show that school attendance is crucial for individual mental health and for general public health. It is also clear that school absenteeism is a major problem in our society. These are the reasons why we have chosen to take a closer look at this problem.

In the study, the term "Problematic school absenteeism" will be used. This can be divided into different levels and then also requires different levels of treatment. This essay will stick to the most severe form of problematic school absenteeism, namely that the student is absent for at least twenty-five percent of the school time for at least two weeks and experiences serious problems going to school and/or with an impact on the child/adolescent's or family's daily routines (Kearney, 2001). The most severe form is used, because it best corresponds to the sample of pupils with school absences that the study covers.

The overall research situation regarding problematic school absenteeism shows that students with neuropsychiatric problems are overrepresented in terms of absenteeism. In 2018, a Norwegian study compared 78 students with autism spectrum disorder with 138 neurotypical students.

It was concluded that school refusal was significantly higher in students with autism spectrum disorder compared to neurotypical students and that students with autism spectrum disorder are not given equal opportunities to cope with school (Munkhaugen, 2018). Another study conducted in 2020 highlights eligibility for upper secondary school for students with autism spectrum disorder without intellectual disability.

The study was conducted on 6,138 students. Twenty-nine percent fewer individuals with autism compared to individuals without autism were eligible for high school. (Stark et al., 2021). This study shows that students with autism spectrum disorder do not seem to have the same opportunities to move on to higher education even though they do not have an intellectual disability.

These studies made us curious to study problematic school absenteeism for students with neuropsychiatric problems.

As shown above, there is research that confirms that students with diagnoses such as autism and ADHD are overrepresented in problematic school absenteeism. Since one or two neuropsychiatric diagnoses rarely explicitly explain the individual's functioning, we find it uninteresting to focus on specific diagnoses (Gillberg, 2018). A diagnosis of a child also changes expression over the years and the individual's behavior further up in the years can be better explained by another diagnosis or none at all (Gillberg, 2018). Therefore, the term ECCENCE is used instead for the difficulties that these diagnoses entail. ESSENCE stands for Early Symptomatic Syndromes Eliciting Neurodevelopmental Clinical Examinations.

It is an umbrella term for neuropsychiatric developmental disorders without a diagnosis. (Gillberg, 2018). The basic idea is to offer help to children with previous developmental disorders without them having to have received a specific diagnosis in the area.

Behaviours that fall under ESSENCE include concentration difficulties, planning problems, attention deficits, impulsivity and restlessness, various language disorders, motor difficulties, coordination difficulties, perceptual difficulties, learning problems, dyslexia, dyscalculia, conduct disorder, tics and mood swings. Ten percent of the Swedish population of children has one or more of the above developmental abnormalities. (Gillberg, 2018).

This preconception leads to the conclusion that the study is about problematic school absenteeism linked to students with ESSENCE. We want to find out what is perceived as helpful in getting students with ESSENCE back to school or to a learning experience.

The study is illuminated with a systemic, social constructionist and network-based theoretical perspective. This means that problems do not exist inside the individual, but between them in interaction. These interactions are in constant motion and change. The network perspective is that a problem cannot be considered in isolation from those who are affected.

5. Previous research

Previous research was first sought on why it is important to go to school in the first place. This is to get a scientific basis for the study. Research has been sought with the link to problematic school absenteeism and developmental abnormalities. Research has also been sought with the link to problematic school absenteeism and ESSENCE. The terms used are; "school refusal", "school attendance" and "school absenteeism". Research has also been sought on interventions to prevent school absenteeism and research on treating ongoing school absenteeism. In summary, there is research that addresses problematic school absenteeism linked to autism and ADHD as well as other developmental disorders. There is a study that deals with ESSENCE and the ability to cope with school demands, but no study with the link to problematic school absenteeism. There is a lot of research on preventing school absenteeism and treating ongoing school absenteeism. A summary of the studies is presented below.

5.1 Research on problematic school absenteeism and Autism or ADHD

In addition to the two studies mentioned in the introduction, another study shows that school absenteeism is higher among students with ADHD than with students without ADHD (Orm et al., 2022). In another study, they looked at 154 children, some of whom had ASD (autism spectrum disorder) and/or ADHD, some had other diagnoses and some had no diagnosis at all. It was found that students with neuropsychiatric diagnoses were more likely to refuse school due to bullying than other students (McClemont et al., 2021).

In the very last few years, attention has been paid to children with neuropsychiatric difficulties combined with giftedness. They are thus "twice exceptional", and are called 2E-students. There is research and literature that deals with adaptations and challenges for these students, but no research that studies the connection to absenteeism. 2E is about high talent in combination with NPF (neuropsychiatric impairments). The students do their school work at a high rate at a high reflective level, which means that they may have difficulty fitting into

the school's structure. These students like to compensate for the shortcomings with the help of their intellect, which can result in burnout and school absences. Adults in the school need to listen to the student and adapt the teaching to their individual conditions and interests (Rehn, 2021), (www.funktionskonsulten.se/blogg/2e-och-problematisk-skolfrånvaro).

5.2 Research with the connection ESSENCE

As the ESSENCE concept includes many different developmental abnormalities, we have sought research on a few more specific diagnoses in addition to autism and ADHD, linked to problematic school absence. There has been research on students with dyslexia and learning difficulties and these students are also at greater risk of school absences, but above all they have school-related problems (Corcoran & Kelly, 2022), (Wilmot et al., 2023)

There are also studies regarding mental illness, as a common consequence of ESSENCE (Gillberg, 2018), linked to school refusal. In a longitudinal study over an 8-year period, it was found that 88.2% had psychiatric disorders such as behavioral disorders, specific fears, sleep difficulties, somatic complaints, difficulties in peer relations. (Egger et al., 2003).

In one study, the concept of ESSENCE linked to school or learning was studied. It was investigated whether the goals in the primary school curriculum could be achieved. The study shows that students who failed in at least one subject had significantly lower cognitive test results and significantly more ESSENCE concerns, compared to those who passed in all subjects. The study states that the knowledge requirements in the curriculum need to be reviewed and adapted to these circumstances (Lindblad et al., 2018).

5.3 Research on how to prevent school absenteeism

In the introduction, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate's mapping of continuous school absences in 2016 was mentioned. In the same year, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate also published a qualitative study that looked at how to work preventively. The survey shows that the schools do not, to a sufficiently large extent, try to find out the real underlying reasons for the absence. Measures are often tried based on assumptions and the students' own competences are used to a very limited extent. The action program often focuses on educational efforts, despite the fact that almost none of the students in the review had learning difficulties. The review also shows that student health is often forgotten or involved far too late. The report also revealed that neither student health, students nor guardians are always involved in the development of action programs. In conclusion, the review shows that guardians, whom the School Inspectorate met in the review, make several coordinating efforts for their child's right to education and support, which according to the School Act rests with the principal (School Inspectorate 2016).

A compilation of all the relevant research that existed on what counteracts problematic school absence was done in 2019. Several areas are emphasized regarding which areas promote school attendance. These are; the student's experience of security and participation (peers, belonging, commitment). Good learning environment; Good teaching quality and good

leadership in the classroom, positive expectations of students and good relationships. Furthermore, it emphasizes areas such as organizational awareness and a holistic perspective, systematic work for school attendance, proactive health work, safe transitions, as well as dialogue and collaboration within and outside the school's organization (Ifous, 2019).

In 2021, the Swedish National Agency for Education published a national survey describing what is effective in preventing school absenteeism. Figures regarding pupils with neuropsychiatric problems do not appear specifically in the study, but these pupils are among the figures because they study according to the compulsory school curriculum. The report mentions words such as proximity, relationships, security, well-being, values, communication and relationship with guardians, as well as collaboration with external actors. The report also shows that the schools located in sparsely populated areas with a proximity to the surroundings, generally speaking, have the lowest school absenteeism in the country (Skolverket, 2021).

5.4 Research on how to treat problematic school absenteeism or how to get the student back to school

There are developed treatment methods that empirically identify the factors that contribute to school refusal and adapt the treatment accordingly. Helpful in getting students back to school is to conduct a functional assessment of school refusal to determine the underlying causes, further to use cognitive-behavioral therapy to address the negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors associated with school refusal, and to involve parents, teachers, and other important people in the treatment process and provide them with support and guidance to promote the student's attendance and engagement in school and adapt the treatment to the pupil's age, level of development and individual needs. You also need to be flexible and creative in finding solutions that work for each student (Kearney, 2001).

A dissertation from 2019 highlights underlying, inducing and perpetuating factors as the cause of school absenteeism. The thesis also sheds light on the reasons that have contributed to increased attendance and reintegration in school. These are changes in the school environment, long-term support from important adults, and a sense of social belonging and trust. Active participation in progressively stimulating local environments, such as peer groups or families, and trust in the school staff's competence and opportunities to meet the pupil on an interpersonal level are supporting forces that promote the pupil's presence and development. When school staff, parents and students have a common understanding and view of difficulties, strengths and possible ways forward, this seems to optimize the conditions for increased attendance. When students have increased attendance again, it has often been in a context where they have felt validated, where they have felt connected to others and where their inherent potential has been allowed to blossom (Forsell, 2019).

In the research that has been studied, it is often referred to that students with neuropsychiatric difficulties have a higher level of problematic school absenteeism than others, but Forsell believes that it is not the specific diagnosis that determines whether a student is at risk of developing a problematic school absence. Rather, it is the individual's vulnerability in relation to the environment's risk factors that affect the student's ability to develop and thrive in school (Forsell, 2019).

An American study shows that the etiological and sustaining factors that cause school refusal are often multisystemic in nature. Nevertheless, the interventions that are recommended are individualized. The article argues for the usefulness of a multisystemic approach. Intervention options are described at exosystemic, mesosystemic, and microsystemic levels (Lyon & Cotler, 2009).

Further research sheds light on the causes of school absenteeism in Sweden, but above all on the perspective of treatment to get the student back to school. The researcher sheds light on collaboration, where the various authorities collaborate according to law, but where each authority takes its own perspective. The social worker at BUP is also based on the medical perspective and loses the basic profession, social work. The author argues that the truant's problem picture is more complex and lies at different levels, at the individual, family and school level and that one needs to work at all levels at the same time (Ek, 2018).

An Australian study suggests that school refusal is a complex problem that can paralyze both parents and professionals. The article presents a framework for family therapeutic intervention from the structural and post-Milan school (Richardson, 2016).

6. Theoretical perspective

6.1 Systemic and Social Constructionist Perspectives.

One of the theoretical perspectives, with which the issue is illustrated, is systemic and social constructionist. A systemic perspective is basically about understanding a problem as a whole where the different parts affect each other and that the sum of the whole becomes more than the sum of its parts. It is therefore more interesting to study the interaction in a system than to study the parts separately. This is done by studying the communication between people. (Hårtveit & Jensen 2005). The problems do not exist within the individual, but between them in interaction (Bateson, 1972). Our systemic perspective is focused on social constructionism, which is about all of us creating our version of reality. According to Gergen, there is no objective truth and he believes that our truths are created and recreated in relation to each other (Gergen, 1985, 2015). Gergen also argues that meaning is created through language and that language is a social construction that is constantly changing. Descriptions and understandings of people and other phenomena are basically the fruit of interactions that take place in language that are recreated in dialogue with each other, our agreements are created in language. The changed interaction provides opportunities for new organization, new roles and increased flexibility (Gergen, 1985, 2015).

Anderson and Goolishian argue that we humans come into being in relation to each other and that we are nothing without being defined by others. These definitions are also constantly changing. The image of reality is constantly being created and reshaped in linguistic dialogue between people (Hoffman, 1985, Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). Problems are also socially constructed, which is a way of looking at problems that make them solvable in language. In the language system tradition, there is an approach where the therapist starts from a "non-knowing perspective". This means that the client is an expert in their lives where several voices are heard. The therapist's responsibility is to use the language of the participants to define the problem and solve it together (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992) (Anderson, 2006).

This perspective puts the therapist in a so-called "non-knowing position". It's about the therapist not having to, and not even being able to, be an expert on how the client should live their life. The therapist's task is to help those involved find new space, new challenges and new definitions through joint dialogue (Anderson, 2006).

In a multiplicity of realities, there is a need for narratives that reshape the definitions of ourselves and our surroundings (Anderson 2006). This gives us new narratives. The narrative perspective is about our understanding of ourselves and further about the life stories that we create through our actions, feelings, memories, and experiences with each other. The narratives focus on how the individual makes sense of and interprets his or her life-world. The narratives about people convey a meaning about their identity that comes into being through language and the interconnected stories of the past, present and future (Anderson, 2006). A new narrative can be created through an alternative narrative, told by the individual or by the environment, which is rich in details about a person's history. Such a narrative can create room for change (Morgan 2004).

Narrative is a process of how we organize our life events so that they are comprehensible and how we are involved in what we understand. Narrative is our way of fantasizing about alternatives and actualizing choices. Our story becomes our identity, which is constantly changing. In these identity-creating processes, we become actors and gain our own ability to act. This self-action ability defines individuals as free agents with their own innate resources to think, feel, act, and make independent choices in their lives. The human being is seen as important and competent, with the right to redefine and transform the self and one's identity in relationships and conversations (Anderson, 2006).

6.2 Network-Based Perspective and Open Conversations.

The network-based perspective defines problems that need to include something that someone is dissatisfied with and that they want to address, as well as a linguistic expression for it. A problem cannot be considered separately from those who are affected (Forsberg & Wallmark, 2021). The network is the subjective network, the social context around a certain person, which we relate to, like, distance ourselves from or respond to. A network perspective means that the professionals take into account their client's entire social context. Another word used in these contexts is network therapy. However, this word only refers to contexts and situations that are based on voluntary agreements between all involved (Forsberg & Wallmark, 2021). In interaction between people, the focus shifts from behavior to language, meaning is given through language to what is happening (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). Despite the fact that it has been stated that there is no objectivity, Maturana and Varela argue that sometimes it is necessary to "keep objectivity in parentheses". As a network therapist, you may need to switch between the objective and the subjective, but always as if it were possible to be objective and with an awareness that it is not possible (Forsberg & Wallmark, 2021).

In order to create dialogue and change in network meetings, so-called dialogical dialogues need to be established. It's about an equal relationship where all parties have an equal say. The reverse, monologue dialogue, is a concept that means that the speaker formulates his or her thoughts into something ready-made where he or she does not need any filler or addition. In a dialogical dialogue, the speaker owns only half of what he or she has just said, and the audience's reactions are noticed and become important. These reactions of the meeting

participants are the speaker's internal structure, the vertical one, which is constantly changing in step with a polyphonic reality, the outer, the horizontal, where several voices are heard at the same time. In dialogical conversations, everyone takes part in this social construction that generates encounters, understanding and change. The meetings rest on a foundation of tolerance for uncertainty, dialogueism and polyphony. It is important to be open to everyone's perspective to possible descriptions of the situation. Dialogism is about language being the carrier of change. Polyphony is about the expression of many different voices. (Seikkula, 2011) (Seikkula, 1996).

When several voices are present and the participants talk about a particular theme, the language is between the individuals. Through dialogue, new narratives are born for experiences that do not yet have words. It takes place in a new context that can contribute to shared experiences about the present and what is going on, among those who meet. Each contributes with their own perspective on the problem with the aim of achieving a common understanding. The network model talks about system consultation where solutions to the problems are mainly based on the family's conditions and a trust in the individual's healing resources. The main principle of network meetings is to view the network as a resource and enabler of change. That is, to abandon the notion of the network's professional role as the healer of the problem (Seikkula 1996).

7. Aim and research questions

Research studied in the field shows that relationships and networks are crucial to getting the student back to school. But how? What is helpful in what is so crucial? It also appears that pupils with various developmental disorders are overrepresented in problematic school absenteeism, which is included in the ESSENCE concept. We want to find out what is perceived as helpful in getting students with ESSENCE back to school or to a learning experience.

Purpose

To investigate what families, the attendance team SKIFO and school staff describe as helpful in the work of getting the student back to school or to a learning experience.

Issues

1. What do families feel has been helpful in their youth increasing their school attendance/interest in learning?
2. What do the professionals at SKIFO think has contributed to the young people increasing their school attendance or learning process?
3. What do the professionals in the school think has been helpful in that the students have increased their school attendance or their interest in learning?

8. The method

The study rests on a hermeneutic foundation. This means that data collection and processing it is a matter of interpretation and understanding. The hermeneutical scientist tries to answer the question; What is it that appears and what is the meaning of it? (Starrin & Svensson, 1994). The study is about finding out how informants describe, experience and believe, that something has been helpful or contributed to an increased school attendance, i.e. sensory data. Therefore, a qualitative method is suitable (Ahrne & Svensson, 2022). The study is inductive, which means that the empirical data governs the theoretical conclusions chosen for the study, even if a theoretical perspective has been presented initially. Several parts of our social system have been studied; an attendance team, a group of school staff, and some families. Since the purpose of the study has been to illustrate people's lived experiences put in an ongoing context that affects each other, a qualitative method is suitable. As researchers, we have had a freedom to move between these parts of the social system in the collection of data (Ahrne & Svensson, 2022) (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

8.1 Selection

They believe that they work systemically with problematic school absenteeism with students with ESSENCE. The attendance team had contacted the Department of Social Work with requests for research to be carried out on their activities. As the question in this study was suitable, contact was mediated through Karin Thorslund at the department. For this reason, they are presented in a little more detail. The attendance team is a collaboration between school and social services. The abbreviation of this becomes SKIFO. The families arrive through the student health service at the "home school" who have identified a problem and the attendance team is introduced to the family. If the family accepts support and help, the principal from the home school writes an application for this. SKIFO collaborates with schools and families around pupils with problematic school absenteeism. The attendance team consists of an educator who is also further trained in systemic work, a family therapist and a social educator. However, the social pedagogue was not available during the period that the study was conducted.

Their work works in such a way that they meet the family, the school and the young person, separately, and then work with them together. They are trying to find a common problem. They describe that they work network-based where they meet all parties together and try to understand the problems and needs of the entire system. Staff see themselves as part of the system they are working with. They describe that they are in subsystems and that these systems affect each other. Their view is that the attendance team together with home and school is a whole system and they emphasize that the systems must change at the same time. This requires a common understanding but taking into account different needs and conditions. They also believe that they constantly influence each other and that these processes are changing over time (Personal communication with Rolf Agaton and Stefan Johansson, 23 01 19).

SKIFO has evaluated its efforts via parent surveys and we were able to take part of the results of ten surveys that had been collected in 2019. The families had written about their experiences of contact with SKIFO. It showed that the families were consistently very satisfied and that all the pupils were back in some form of school. They were also asked to rate the experience of the contact on a scale of 1 - 4 where 1 was "should be developed", 2 was "developable", 3 meant "works" and 4 was "works well". Seven of them rated 4. This result is another reason why we chose to use this Attendance team in our study. The business seems to have a way of working that works and makes us curious to find out more. (Appendix 1).

The study thus consisted of data collection from two personnel from the attendance team SKIFO.

Data collection was also collected from three different families. Three families, currently in the attendance team, were asked to be selected. The three pupils would have a problematic school absence and fall under the concept of ECCENSE. Contact information for these families was obtained from the attendance team. To protect the identity of the young person and the family in the study, they were given fictitious names. A selection criterion was also that the pupils should attend the same school. The young person and her father were involved from one family. The next family was attended by only the mother, and the third family consisted of parents and two sisters.

The sample also included four staff members from a school where the selection criterion was that the school staff had been active in working with the three intended young people. Contact information was obtained from the attendance team. In total, data was collected from five systems, with a total of thirteen individuals.

8.2 Data collection

The methods used were focus group interviews and individual interviews.

In the study, the two mentioned people in the attendance team SKIFO were interviewed. The staff at the school were interviewed in a focus group and the three families were interviewed on a family-by-family basis. A total of five interviews were conducted.

Attendance team: Regarding an interview with the attendance team, a date was booked with them via email. The interview with the staff took place at their premises and it was recorded.

The families: When the families had agreed to be interviewed, they were contacted via email where they received a short presentation and a suggested time for an interview. Two of them responded within two minutes and one respondent within 10 minutes. This is interpreted to mean that they wanted to tell us their story. From the first family, Elsa was interviewed 20 years old together with her father. From the second family, Lina's mother was interviewed. Dad wasn't in the picture. Lina, 13 years old, didn't want to come with me. From the third family, Peters (12 years old) both parents and two older sisters participated. As the treatment was still going on in Peter's family, he was unable to attend another meeting. The interviews with the families took place in SKIFO's premises because it was the easiest and safest for them. The ambition was to interact with the families in order to be able to interpret what was said. The interview format used was a more guided conversation where we listened to hear what meaning emerged (Warren, 2002).

School: The staff interviewed in the focus group had worked with the attendance team around the students in question. Via e-mail, we presented ourselves and the research question.

During conversations on the phone, a member of staff suggested that they could be interviewed in small groups via link. The idea of a focus group was explained; During the interview, the staff would have the opportunity to reflect together on what was helpful, but also have the opportunity to share other people's experiences. The knowledge generated by the method is based on collective, shared experiences. Differences emerge and are discussed, and an understanding grows out of these discussions (Kitzinger, 1994). The staff was perceived to understand the idea of the way to collect data. An appointment for a focus group was booked and four of the staff, who had worked with the young people in question, were interviewed; a resource educator from a resource group for high school students, a special needs teacher and a social educator for middle school, and a principal for middle school. All of them knew at least one of the young people in question well and had been active in the work of trying to get the student back to learning in collaboration with SKIFO and family. The interview took place on the school's premises.

8.2.1 Question Guide

All groups of informants were asked about what school attendance or attitudes towards learning looked like before there was a change. This was followed by questions about how the work during the change looked like and what they found helpful. Questions were asked about what happened and when it turned around. How and who noticed something? When the purpose and questions were presented, there was care that those who were interviewed felt free to tell what was perceived as helpful for them, that the answer did not have to be SKIFO or something else specific. The professionals were also asked questions about changes at the process level, if they could see patterns in what was helpful. (Appendix 2)

8.3. Method of processing and analysis

All five interviews were recorded and kept confidential. The material was transferred from sound to text via a computer program, the conversations were transcribed (Wibeck, 2010). A comparison was made between the printed material and the recorded material, so that words and sentences were identical. The dataset comprises 120 transcribed pages. There are three levels of transcription where level one is a very detailed transcription with spoken language, sounds, unfinished sentences, hesitation sounds, pauses, overlapping sentences, etc. The second level is also verbatim but not as detailed. Level three is completely normative of written language (Linell, (1994). The transcription made in the study is closest to level two. Those who speak are named. Pauses and hesitation sounds in the form of dots are present. Unfinished sentences are also included (Wibeck, 2010).

8.3.1. Reflexive thematic analysis

The data was analyzed using a reflexive thematic analysis. The transcribed material was read comprehensively, we listened, paused, and read again. Things that recurred or struck a chord in relation to the research question were picked out. The material was read again and again and new words, sentences and meanings were circled. The reflexiveness of thematic analysis is about how the researcher relates to the material (Braun & Clarke 2022).

Thematic analysis is flexible because it is independent of a theoretical framework, but the researcher always needs to stick to some kind of starting point, a discipline of knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2006) (Braun & Clarke 2013). It is against the theoretical perspectives that we listened and searched for descriptions, words that became codes and categories and then became themes.

A careful analysis and identification of patterns or themes was sought. The analysis began at the time of transcription by the emergence of potential themes and patterns. Great emphasis was placed on getting well acquainted with the data, we listened to the recorded material several times and noted down prominent themes. The data was then studied again together to be encoded. The data associated with the codes was collected, which was then categorized. Then, the categories were sorted into potential themes with associated raw data. (Braun & Clarke 2006).

- The data material was transcribed and read through repeatedly, and we noted things that could become themes and related to the whole.
- Segments of data that seemed relevant to answer the research question were sought. The finds were attributed meaningful descriptions that were encoded with various colored pencils. When themes were sought, not only was the content compiled, but attempts were made to capture an analytical view as well.
- Recurring interesting data was coded and compiled under each code. Subsequently, clusters were created, sub-themes of codes that shared the same content and answered the research question.
- Clusters of codes were sorted into sub-themes or categories which were then sorted into potential themes. We then went back to the entire data material to investigate that the themes with the coding and associated data reflected the whole.
- In the fifth step, the question was answered; Which story was clear from the themes in question? The specificity was sought in each theme. Themes were removed and shared. Each theme was given a name and they were clearly defined.
- Finally, all the themes were written down, with associated codes and data material that reflected the whole. (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

8.4 Generalizability

Generalizability is limited in terms of the number of informants. What is perceived as helpful in returning to school in the study may be generalized to other students who fit within the ESSENCE concept but who attend other schools, where they work with problematic school absenteeism. The study may be generalized to students with ESSENCE problems who have come into contact with other attendance teams, where they work in a similar way. By asking the attendance team, the school and three families about what is perceived as helpful in getting the student back to learning, one can also talk about a generalizability for more students who have come into contact with SKIFO. (Ahrne & Svensson, 2022). Another definition of generalizability that could possibly be talked about is the one that is linked to a theoretical framework. What is the study examples of? (Ahrne & Svensson, 2022). The results of the study are examples of how we are nothing without our relationships. A problem cannot be considered separately from those involved, this is where the network-based perspective comes in. The study is also an example of the social constructionist perspective, where our perception of the world and of ourselves is created in

interaction with others and that the result of this interaction is constantly changing (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992).

8.5 Credibility (Reliability)

In order for the study to be as credible as possible, it must be transparent. This transparency is increased when defining concepts, which is done, as well as reproducing exactly how the approach has been carried out, from selection to analysis. The research question has been answered in more ways than one, this is called triangulation. Two methods have been used; Focus group interviews and individual interviews, where data has been collected from both professionals and students. Another way that can strengthen credibility is to feed back the results to the field. This will be done to the informants who have an interest in this. The informants do not have to agree with what has been found, but as researchers we get an indication of whether they can relate to what was captured in the study (Ahrne & Svensson, 2022).

8.6 Ethical considerations

Throughout the process, ethical aspects have been taken into account based on the rules that exist and have been developed by the Swedish Research Council in the publication *Research Ethical Principles in Humanities and Social Science Research*, which has influenced our way of working (Arvill et al., 2021). Personal data has always been handled confidentially. All informants who were invited to participate in the study have consented through oral and written information which they signed (Appendix 3).

In connection with the interviews, each person has received information about the purpose and question of the study, as well as the right to stop without it affecting them. Attention to detail has been found throughout the thesis work regarding transparency and openness. When data collection from a sensitive group of people has taken place, consideration has been given to how this is presented as this may affect the continued relationships and possible continued processing work. Two of the three families were terminated when the interview took place. The third family was in the final stages of their treatment. However, this has not limited us in the search for themes and in analysis. When all informants, before the interview, were asked to tell us what they experienced helpful, we wanted them to feel free to tell both negative and positive experiences. The experience is that everyone felt free in their story, because even what was less helpful or even bad has been revealed.

Since the family members and school staff were given fictitious names, they have been de-identified, and the school's name has also been handled. However, the school staff's professions remain, as it is important that the staff's stories are told based on their actual professional roles. With the staff at SKIFO, it was natural and a joint decision that they participate with their name and title.

In addition to the consent of each person from the school for the focus group interview, this data collection required three additional consents, namely consents from the respective family, that selected and for them, presented school staff, were given permission to talk about the student together with other selected and named colleagues from the same school. This consent was given by all the families.

9. Results and analysis

The analysis resulted in six main themes with underlying sub-themes with associated codes. All themes recurred many times in all five groups of informants. Some themes were more frequent in certain groups. The table below illustrates the results one theme at a time. The research question is; What do families, the attendance team SKIFO and school staff describe as helpful in the work of getting the student back to school or to a learning experience?

Examples of Data	Codes	Sub-theme	Theme
<p>"I didn't have a safe place"</p> <p>"He wanted to kill himself again, what could I do?"</p>	<p>Feeling insecure</p> <p>Need to have someone to ask.</p> <p>Lack of control</p> <p>Need to take charge</p>	<p>Abandonment and loneliness create a longing for connection</p> <p>Powerlessness creates anger and a drive to change.</p>	Key to change
<p>"They listened in a different way, they counted on me"</p> <p>"Then we understood each other and the meetings became meaningful"</p> <p>"She came home every week for two years"</p>	<p>Being in a close relationship</p> <p>To be there</p> <p>To grow and choose</p> <p>Influencing and being influenced</p>	<p>Caring contacts</p> <p>Meaningful continuity</p>	Resilient relationships over time

<p>"They're kind of there as a life jacket." "We're going in this direction together."</p> <p>"And when they increased too much, there was a backlash, so we had to back off."</p>	<p>A stretchy support Team spirit Hard work</p> <p>Seeing different levels Attunement Same goal Empathy</p>	<p>Focused collaboration</p> <p>Common understanding</p>	<p>At the same time, parallel work between all concerned</p>
<p>"We could throw the student out, but we don't work like this"</p> <p>"I had to be something other than trouble"</p>	<p>Who do I want to be and what do I want to convey?</p> <p>Becoming in Relationship</p>	<p>Enabling identity of professionals</p> <p>Transforming Identity in Relationship with Families</p>	<p>Salutogenic identity</p>
<p>"She was terrified, she was exhausted but she made it"</p> <p>"I was terrified, I could be reported as principal"</p> <p>"We have to talk to the people around us, otherwise there will be no result"</p>	<p>Venturing into uncertain territory</p> <p>Solution-oriented</p> <p>Daring to believe in change</p>	<p>Daring something new</p> <p>Go Outside the Laws</p> <p>Commitment outside the assignment</p>	<p>Being brave</p>
<p>"I got my own entrance the next day"</p> <p>"She Came Home"</p> <p>"I got a new class"</p> <p>"Then I understood that she also needed to rest, I needed time to make a decision"</p> <p>"She took me out for coffee or a walk" "Det tog tid att hitta sätt att samverka"</p>	<p>Children can't wait, get on the spot quickly</p> <p>Treatment at home</p> <p>Stamina</p> <p>Adherence</p> <p>Process</p>	<p>Interventions that need to be taken care of urgently and in the right place</p> <p>Efforts that need time to be able to generate positive change</p>	<p>Flexibility in time and space in terms of inter-system interventions.</p>

The different themes are presented below with an introductory paragraph on the main theme. In the sections that follow, each sub-theme is presented with associated codes and data.

9.1 Key to change

When the families, school staff or attendance team are asked about what they feel has been helpful in their youth/student having increased their school attendance or interest in learning, it becomes clear that the informants' stories of abandonment and powerlessness become the key to change.

A parent: "What really turned everything around was Peter's suicidal thoughts. So, if he hadn't had that, I don't really know where we would be today. Thanks to him getting it, I was about to say." På liknade sätt beskriver de andra familjerna hjälplöshet, att man står utan skyddsnät, en brist på information, barn utan kontakt med någon vuxen som begriper, att vara ifrågasatt och att vara i kris.

That this can be a basis for change is supported by the study's network theoretical perspective. A problem is a reaction to something that is wrong and needs to be fixed (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). A problem statement needs to contain two parts. That someone is dissatisfied with something that they cannot solve and to give the problem a linguistic expression that it is a problem. According to network theory, people's frustration is the basis for change (Forsberg & Wallmark, 2021).

The work of the professional network is most effective when it is well integrated and does not go too hard against the previously established structure and function of the family. It's about preparing enough and working with the family's resistance, because change requires that the new doesn't become frightening and too different from what the family has done before or can relate to. It is about creating an understanding of the challenges that the family has and faces (Seikkula, 1996)

9.1.1 Abandonment and Loneliness Create a Longing for Contact

In the result, the abandonment becomes clear when the families talk about loneliness, about not having anyone to turn to who understood, about burned relationships, about being questioned and that no one interfered. Abandonment and loneliness create a longing for contact in our informants. En ungdom: "Jag hade ingen trygghetsplats"

The school also talks about a feeling of abandonment, where the staff feel bad because they do not handle all the students without outside support.

School: "Who to call when you need help with a student?"

In his thesis, Forsell draws the central conclusion that regardless of personal characteristics and experiences, the need for belonging in a social context is important for students. He argues that when students have increased their attendance again, it has often been in a context where they have felt acknowledged, where they have felt connected to others and where their inherent potential has been allowed to blossom (Forsell, 2019).

9.1.2 Powerlessness Creates Anger and a Drive to Change

All informants, including the professionals, begin their story with a sense of frustration. The families, the school and even the attendance team express stories in different ways that can be traced to a lack of control. The parents describe panic, an anger that in the analysis is interpreted as a feeling of powerlessness. The school describes powerlessness. Several informants, both families and professionals, also talk about a need to take charge to make a difference.

One parent: "We parents weren't let in. We panicked, she wouldn't let us in. We tried to help but she slipped away from home. She was acting out and had self-acting behavior. We didn't understand that school was terrible. They knew, but they didn't do anything."

The school also describes powerlessness as a basis for change.

School: "As an educator I needed support, they said they wanted to die again, what would I do? Some have to work with the parents or we won't be able to do it."

9.2 Resilient relationships over time

This theme is consistently frequent. The informants talk about a caring contact as a breakthrough and lack of contact as loss with serious consequences. Meaningful continuity of relationships seems to be crucial for the healing process and for all parties to become self-sustaining in the work of getting the youth back to school or to learning. The informants' stories are interpreted as the ability to recover and come back, it is about careful contacts and meaningful continuity.

One parent: "We kind of had to piece together the family. Grandpa took a lot. We decided that now Peter would just do fun things. We made up and went swimming. He really had to recover and find his way back to the spark of life. The fact that he was on sick leave from school, it was probably a relief because it was like a lot of school chafing."

Even the professionals talk about the theme of resilient relationships over time. Relationships where the professionals are supported and are supporting.

School: "We started having monthly meetings because we wanted to have an overall picture. We worked very closely together. When SKIFO came in, it was soothing, - So now we breathe. You are doing a fantastic job, but here and now you can't do more in school.

"SKIFO: "As a family therapist, I gave the family an enormous amount of praise and credit for what they had done. They had really made an effort to make it better. And then somehow they clearly saw a difference at home, which made them keep doing things. That was kind of the start of the opportunity for change."

In social constructionist theory, "the problem-defined system" is described. The system is made up of everyone who is affected by or affects the problem and it does not dissolve until everyone involved participates in some way. Problems are solved by putting them into words together with others. The new words and definitions of the problem are shared in dialogue and through this dialogue the picture changes, causing the problem-defined system to dissolve (Anderson, 2006). In the study, our informants tell us that contact and continuity in constant dialogue, in relationship and over time is crucial.

9.2.1 Caring contacts

The attendance team says they're opening up an opportunity for people to see roads. They believe that lasting changes come from voluntariness and from close contacts in a context.

SKIFO: "You just show a bigger reality, then people choose."

They describe that they work systemically, in relationships. This is theoretically supported by the fact that hypotheses formulated in a mutual dialogue have a greater chance of leading further than explanations that have been delivered by an "outsider" therapist. Through various interventions, the professionals in the network team try to become "less professional" and in that way gain emotional closeness. For example, through a simple intervention, so-called "constructive division of roles", focus is placed on existential themes such as being mothers of teenage children or being a single parent. The system changes, relatives and professionals have the opportunity to experience more community and share similar experiences in order to move on to alternative perspectives to address the problem. (Wallmark & Forsberg, 2021).

A parent: "For now, she's got a person to trust. That you went out for coffee with and talked about life with. You could see when they met how positive it was."

The families describe how important the caring contacts are, for example, by being able to trust someone or to be counted on and to be seen and acknowledged.

9.2.2 Meaningful continuity

The informants talk about the importance of an uninterrupted context and that they need each other over time. They also talk about what happens when relationships fail. In a meaningful continuity, they describe how they come into being in relation to someone else. Someone else is there, always. The attendance team describes that people grow and choose a way to move towards a functioning life situation that suits them.

School: "We started seeing him at the end of fifth grade. We started seeing him twice a week. And then we started. We just met to build relationships, play cards, and go for walks."

A parent: "She came to our house, and met all of us. Then they sat down and talked, the two of them just, it clicked immediately. It was amazing. She became Peter's lifeline and medicine. Without her, we wouldn't be where we are today. They really met regularly and just did fun things."

A youth: "She came there and showed me that you're not alone. She told me that it won't be easy, but you'll get through it. She said, if it doesn't work, it doesn't work. If you still try, you'll see what happens. And that's when I tried. That's when I started."

The informants' stories of continuity can also be found in previous research. In the Swedish National Agency for Education's national survey, which describes what is active and what prevents school absenteeism, words such as proximity, relationships, security, well-being, and values are mentioned. Communication and relationship with guardians are mentioned, as well as collaboration with external actors (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2021a).

9.3. Concurrent parallel work between all the parties concerned

In the interviews with the families, it is mentioned that it is important that there are several actors acting at the same time. All informants say that it is not enough for the school alone to

act. Although the families testify that it was difficult to have to break patterns and change in the family, they see it as a crucial part of the child now going to school.

A focused collaboration together with a common understanding seem to be important pieces of the puzzle when it comes to getting the student back to school. Networks between the actors are described as a mutual flow where everyone's story becomes equally important. It will be the therapist's task to create the conditions for conversations where new approaches can be born from within the system (Forsberg & Wallmark, 2021).

School: "SKIFO does as much work with the parents as with the students. And sometimes more with the parents. And it's good for us that they do. Absolutely, and that's a huge success factor. But we can see that as a bit of a common thread with all these students. That it is also the parents who need it. You need to work from both sides. It doesn't help that only school breaks. It has to be someone else from another direction as well."

The school describes above a kind of "system consultation" where the main principle is to look for new perspectives on the problem in network meetings. There is no attempt to change the family from the outside. Solutions to the problems are mainly based on the family's conditions and a belief in the healing resources of the individual. The network sees itself as a resource and enabler of change (Seikkula 1996).

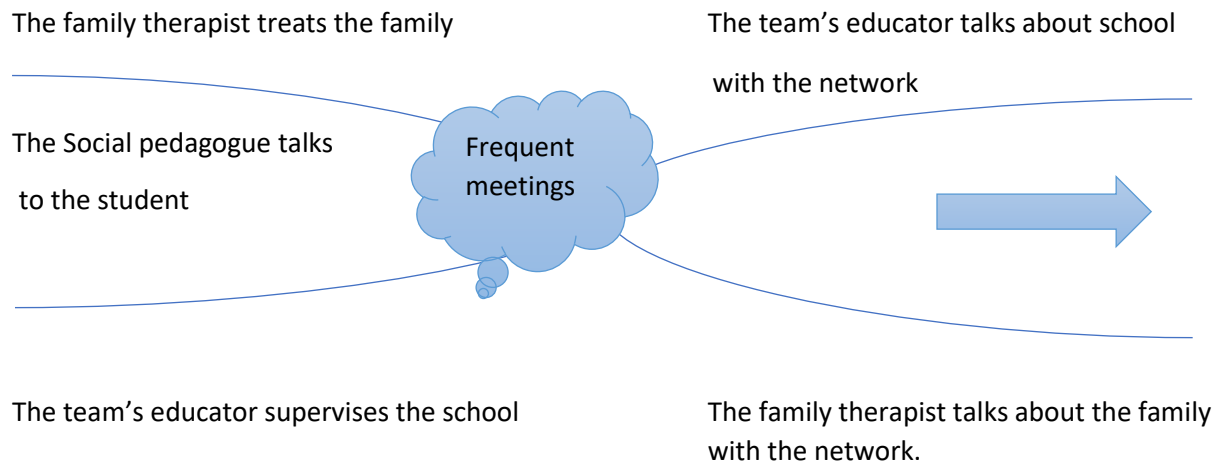
One parent: "I think it was mainly the special educators who slowly but surely read Peter. How much can he handle? Can we increase? And when they increased too much, there was a setback, then we had to back off. But then we as parents could say that now it's too much. Then it was very nice to call Stefan and tell him that now it doesn't work again, now we have fallen. Then he just calmed down and said, good, let's stop for a bit and then we'll back off."

9.3.1 Focused collaboration

Focused collaboration is the present team's own concept. What stands out and what the team emphasizes as an important success factor is that the right profession must do what it is best at. It also seems to be the case that they go in and out of being participating observers or observers. During a network meeting, you also need to be able to make interventions based on an objective assessment. (Wallmark & Forsberg, 2021). Professionals sometimes need to make judgments while being part of the system in which they operate. According to Maturana, objectivity is kept in parentheses, i.e. one behaves as if it were possible to be objective (Maturana & Varela, 1992). This "objectivity" seems to be at the center of the picture below, where the actual networking process is illustrated when the professionals meet.

SKIFO: "Because I'm a family therapist. I'm not an educator. I won't be credible if I say; Do this and it will be so good in school. But when the educator does that, it takes hold. So be it.

Then it becomes kind of understandable and meaningful to the family. And I, as a family therapist, talked to the family."



The families tell us things that indicate that they experience an elastic support, where professionals around the child tune in and see different levels of need in challenging. Both the school and the attendance team testify to a team spirit and describe hard work with a common goal and empathy. Conversely, the families also see that, without the school's actions, it would not have been possible either.

A parent: "The SKIFO team, they kind of exist as a life jacket. They are a net that you can go back on, and just as it is no problem to go from 30 school hours to 3. In our world, that would be hell. No fuss for them. And everything just falls into place. To me, that is support."

9.3.2 Common understanding

The informants also talk about the importance of a common understanding of the families' difficulties. Above all, there must be an understanding of the child's functioning, strengths, challenges, and difficulties. Everyone says that there must be knowledge about problematic school absenteeism and about children who fall under the concept of ESSENCE.

School: "It's all about us having a consensus. That we see the student and the home and the school in the same way. Everyone knows what has been said. If everyone hears the same thing at the same time, it's very difficult to interpret it in any other way than in common. And all these people have to think in the same way and try to work in the same direction. We have the same goal. It can be different paths. But everyone needs to know the different routes they take to get there. "

SKIFO: "It's important that our group is very close to each other. We share what's happening. The feeling of the family, the feeling of the child, the feeling of school. To help each other. What's important right now? What is it that the social educator needs to focus on and the educator and the family therapist, and we decide that together."

The families also talk about a common understanding, an understanding that the problem is complex. Students have difficulties and strengths at the same time. They need to talk to someone who understands ADHD. They need to understand that they are a family in crisis.

A parent; "It was nice to talk to someone who understood."

The above reasoning can be linked to the Swedish Schools Inspectorate's survey, which looked at how to work to prevent school absenteeism or to get the student back to school. The study showed that there was not enough effort to find out the real underlying reasons for

absenteeism. In the parallel work that the informants talk about in the study, the family therapist takes care of the root causes. The Schools Inspectorate's review also concluded that the pupils' own skills are used to a very limited extent. The action plan often focuses on pedagogical measures, despite the fact that almost none of the pupils in the review had learning difficulties. In the work done in the study with the young people in question, the pupil's own skills are taken into account and the teaching is based on that. The audit also shows that pupils or guardians are not always involved (Schools Inspectorate 2016). In the stories we have heard, the guardians are the main actors.

Further research also shows that the problem of school absenteeism is complex and exists at the individual, family and school level and that you need to work at all levels at the same time (Ek, 2018).

In theory, we talk about inner and outer dialogues where the inner dialogue, the vertical dialogue, is inside the individual while the outer, the one that is heard, between people, is the horizontal dialogue. These two dialogues must be allowed to take place simultaneously in an ongoing flow in order for an encounter, an understanding and a change to take place (Seikkula, 1996). The school talks about a consensus, to hear the same thing, to work in the same direction but that you take different paths. This can be interpreted as having a common understanding but that different perspectives may prevail at the same time. Dialogue is met when it is dialogic, i.e. when there is room for uncertainty, when the speaker only owns half of what he or she has just said, and when the audience's reactions are important. In this polyphony, the meeting itself takes place in a focused collaboration and a common understanding. (Seikkula, 2011) (Seikkula, 1996).

9.4 Salutogenic identity

When the informants talked about a changed and health-promoting identity, a sense of pride could be heard. The professionals talked about who you want to be or even are! This was based on how they had acted and what they had achieved. It became clear that identity became something that came about in relationships and interactions with others. The informants defined identity as something worth striving for, a sense of belonging, making conscious choices and accepting changing roles.

A youth: "She didn't see me for my problems, she saw me for me. That I was more than just a problem. I didn't feel as trapped anymore but I didn't know how to explain it. So when she actually came there and talked about other things, I felt it was a relief. I wasn't alone."

The above reasoning is supported in theory by the fact that language is an essential part of the creation of human identity. We come into being in relation to each other by sharing language. Through language, we create narratives by shaping, informing, and reshaping our history, memories, emotions, and culture. A narrative is like a thread that weaves together events and creates a story. The narratives are not static, but they are constantly in motion and renewal as long as life exists. Our narratives are not lost, but are constantly followed up by new experiences. Relationships enable new realities of ourselves and of our identity construction (Anderson, 2006).

9.4.1. Enabling identity of professionals

Some of the informants described identity as an attitude and standpoint that is followed by a sense of responsibility. Identity was described by the informants as having self-reflection and self-perception and something that separates one individual from another.

School: "Everyone else wanted to send the student away, but that's not how we work!"

School: "I think we tried to find solutions together to help. We're all here because we want the kids to go to school."

School: "But from the fact that the children haven't come to school, we have to start somewhere. Yes, how do we do this? What do we do now? How should we think? It's not easy. But we have the management with us and we have to try, for their sake. I think we turn ourselves inside out to make it work. "

SKIFO: "The mother worked very actively to try to support her daughter and help her in different ways. We started talking to my mother about salutogenics. What are the girl's strengths? What is she good at? How do you lift Lina, because she needed to feel that she was good enough for something."

9.4.2 Transforming Identity in Relation to Families

The informants characterized identity as mirroring oneself in others, in one's surroundings, in order to gain an understanding and a demarcation. They talked about becoming in relation to someone else, someone else who understood and saw them in a different way, who saw strengths and resources.

One youth: "I got to talk about my interests and she listened to me!"

A sibling: "We got help so now I'm a sister who is there for my brother, he can only ask."

A father: "I became more involved as a father, I wasn't forgotten, then we had a better connection. Later we were understood, then the conversations became fruitful and we became more like a family."

In theory, there is talk of a non-knowing position, a position in which the professional follows the client in word and sentence. In order for people to have access to their own resources, knowledge must not stand in the way of the client's story. The therapist's responsibility is to use the patient's own language to define the problem and solve it together (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992) (Anderson, 2006). The above stories from the informants show that it is important that the person who is going to help keeps a position where the client can be the expert on his or her life. To be able to talk about one's interests or to be counted on and understood as a father can result in the client getting a different picture of themselves and their context, a health-giving identity, a narrative that carries on.

Research shows that the pupil is strongly influenced by the reflection of who he/she is by the environment, especially the school environment. This mirroring has consequences for how the student perceives himself in the role of learning individual and in the role of peer in the social arena, and for the image of what development is possible (Forsell, 2019).

9.5 Being Courageous

To be brave is another theme that, according to the informants, seems to be able to answer the question. Courage is described in different ways depending on who is describing. Three sub-themes were found; "To dare something new" as described by the families. To "Go outside the laws" and a "Commitment outside the mission", which the professionals talk about.

A youth: "She gave me the courage to talk to someone. She will always be the first. Someone who made me dare."

Being brave and daring is supported in theory as something that creates change. The story of this youth becomes her identity, which is constantly changing. She becomes an actor in her own life and gains her own capacity for action. In this self-action capacity, she creates a different narrative, a different identity. It is an innate asset that opens up for her to be able to think, choose and act as a self-contained being in different situations and enables innovation and potential for change. People come into being through intrinsic powers and resources and knowledge is further developed in interaction with others (Anderson, 2006). To dare to venture into uncertain ground, to engage outside the mission and to believe in change requires courage, the kind of courage called self-action.

9.5.1 Daring Something New

The families talk about venturing into uncertain territory. It's shaky and the trust is not yet there, but with support they dare. When families, schools and attendance teams begin to believe in change, they also become braver.

A parent: "But what's not good at school?" I asked Lina. No, but I'll be done quickly," she said. Then I have nothing to do. Maybe she needs more challenges. Maybe she needs extra to do. There was a lot of whining and she was terrified. But maybe she's smarter, it's too easy for her. Then we begin. We did some national tests. She did seven in a row, she was exhausted. I'm going to make it. And she did."

School: "You get really scared when you have to make a decision like that, to move a student up."

SKIFO: "The student didn't have any challenges at the level she was at the time. There you can also see something that is interesting about ESSENCE. How incredibly important it is to challenge these children. We need to work more on what kind of challenges they should have. Otherwise, it won't work. It can't be too difficult. It can't be too easy. We have to be good at just that."

Here, the attendance team talks about students who we perceive to be "twice exceptional". It is students with a strong intellect, but concomitant difficulties that limit access to that intellect, especially in school-related contexts. Students do their schoolwork at a high pace at a high reflective level, which means that they may find it difficult to fit into the school's setup. These students are happy to compensate for the shortcomings with the help of their intellect, which can result in burnout and school absenteeism. The adults in the school need to listen to the student and adapt the teaching to their individual circumstances and interests. (Rehn, 2021), (www.funktionskonsulten.se/blogg/2e-och-problematisk-skolfrånvaro).

9.5.2 Going Beyond the Laws

In this study, we think we see that as a professional, you need knowledge about students' different levels of talent and how these interact with challenges within ESSENCE. All professionals are keen to find a solution, they need to do something together that gets the student back to school. They do not act outside the law without the management's consent, but they are allowed to stretch the content of the curriculum to make the teaching suitable for the students who have a problematic school absence in combination with ESSENCE.

SKIFO: "Between the thumb and forefinger, if they were to start coming back, how much would it be? Is it like half an hour a week or can we imagine 40 minutes Monday, Wednesday, Friday? What do you think? We do what we can do together with the family."

School: "It's really important that we can actually be flexible in how we work with these people. Then there is a clash with the law. But there has to be a grey area for these people as well. School is for everyone. Then that space must be available. Most of the time they want to go to school, but they can't! It's a little bit about school management, I think. That you actually dare to take that step and say, let's do this. We documented everything so that you still had meat on the bones at the end."

9.5.3 Engagement outside the assignment

The stories show that it is the network's commitment and credibility that makes it possible. Challenging students at the right level is within the school's mission, but here the school shows a commitment that there is really no time for.

School: "She was very good in all subjects. It was the first student I moved up. I'm still nervous, I just hope she makes it to ninth grade and then high school. If we hadn't done that, I don't know where she would be today? But I see a girl today who is very happy. I got a hug yesterday, just like that!"

A parent: "So when the end of the school year was in sixth grade. Then she actually approached the headmaster herself. Then she said, "If you hadn't done this, I wouldn't be alive today." And then everyone broke down. Because it was really from the heart. She hadn't had the strength to go on. Me neither"

These children expose themselves to challenges bordering on burnout. As a child, daring to turn this around and believe in something takes a lot of courage. As a school and responsible there, to dare to believe that a student with "own" difficulties will be able to cope with studies at a higher level seems absurd. The solution for these students is precisely this (Rehn, 2021).

9.6. Flexibility in time and space for inter-system operations

The time aspect stood out in the analysis. All informants put into words that sometimes you need a change immediately. The stories were also about longer processes that were required to build an alliance and trust in the meeting between the different systems. The informants raised the perspective of the necessity of parallel processes in a networking and when many helpers are in at the same time but who, based on the assignment, work fast or slow.

SKIFO: "Then we meet the professionals in the school who are around the student. We interact with them based on timing, and we try things when the parents believe in it. You go step by step with timing depending on where the child is in their psychosocial development together with school work and family."

It has previously been established that hypotheses formulated in a mutual dialogue have a greater chance of surviving than explanations that have been delivered ready-made. It becomes the primary task of the therapist to create the conditions for conversations where new approaches can be born from within the system itself (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). These "New approaches" can be to meet the student in need of an emergency intervention in an action, a behavior, while at the same time the network, through language, in a slow process, gives meaning to what is happening.

9.6.1 Interventions That Need to Be Taken Care of Urgently and in the Right Place

The informants described that the need for emergency measures was sometimes decisive. It could be about having their mental health taken care of, but also about more practical help such as adaptations in time and space at school. The informants say that they would not have been able to cope anymore or that the child would not have gone to school at all without these specific measures.

A youth: "Rolf is the one who does the fixing. He's the one who makes it work to go to school. He understood that I didn't like people and had panic attacks. This classroom you get, this place you get," he said. He asked me how I was doing, how I was doing. And I thought that was really nice. If it didn't work, he'd just say okay, and then he'd change it the next day. It all happened so fast. "

A parent: "Then something happened when we told them. When we sat in meetings. This needs to happen now. Then something happened. Before, we had to wait two or three years. But still with a question mark. SKIFO deserves a lot of praise there. They work fast. There were no obstacles."

School: "It was a bit about the school management, that we had them with us in quick decisions. She probably needed her own entrance, she couldn't go in with others, we solved it."

9.6.2 Interventions That Need Time to Generate Positive Change

The informants talked about the process and why the change required time and patience. They talked about how sometimes you have to brake and reverse. Both professionals and families talked about how sometimes you need to find an acceptance and that right now there is nothing more that can be done.

A youth: "They listened and waited for me. I became receptive to change myself after a while."

One parent: "She never went back to school and was home all through fifth grade. During that period, we were in contact with social services. We would probably have liked SKIFO earlier. It took a very long time. So at a meeting somewhere, I got to say something that was

important and then I would have come to another part of the crisis. I don't know if I had ended up in the processing phase, the shock phase was over I guess.

SKIFO: "During this time, when so much was happening with the school, the process at home must also continue. I lifted them up and this allowed the parents to tell me about their situation. I saw and heard but I waited for them, so they had the time and opportunity to sort of get over their feelings. That's how they became a family together where it's not just about one parent taking responsibility. That was the turning point. I think that the big sisters, who are grown up, are also very helpful. "

Working in a systemic and network-based model is often challenged by the pace and a common objection is that it takes too long. The argument revolves around the notion that problems should be dealt with with solutions. When the meeting between the professional and the private is instead characterized by curiosity and a listening, with exploratory questions, the members are affected and part of the problem. The whole becomes more than the parts, while the balance of power and positions is shifted and equalized. Through good dialogues, the solutions can generate positive change (Forsberg & Wallmark, 2021).

10. Summary analysis and discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate what is perceived as helpful in getting students back who fit under ESSENCE, to return to school or to a learning experience. The study has revealed six themes, the content of which together has been described as helpful. Here is a summary analysis of why the content under each theme is helpful.

Under the theme "Key to Change" there are stories of exclusion and misunderstandings in one's own family, bullying at school, one's own mental illness or difficulties within the ESSENCE concept, lack of peers, a sense of otherness or alienation and incorrect or no adjustments at school. The parents describe a powerlessness and a strong sense of abandonment. The professionals describe similar experiences in being alone and not knowing how to handle the situation. This feeling, which the informants describe, is the origin of them seeking help and starting to talk to others who may be able to help. Thus, "Abandonment and loneliness lead to a longing for connection" and "Powerlessness creates a drive to change".

The families in the study also describe that an important adult is crucial for change, someone who tunes in and creates a "caring connection" that can exist over time, in a "meaningful continuity". Research confirms our finding that "Resilient relationships over time" is crucial. Forsell's thesis contains several examples of how key people in the school have strengthened the pupils' ability to handle school from a learning and social perspective. To be responsible for building trust and confidence seems to be characteristics of the key people who have had a prominent role in the presence promotion work (Forsell, 2019).

From a network therapy perspective, the study shows that what seems to be crucial is also "simultaneous parallel work between all concerned". The first therapeutic grant in a network effort is about mobilizing the network and that it in itself can help.

Everyone should then have their say alongside each other (Forsberg & Wallmark, 2021). This means that the family, school and support persons or family therapists work at the same time, but with different parts of the problem. There are frequent check-ins so that you do not proceed too fast or too slow and, above all, to check that the student is receptive to the efforts

that are made. What, then, is it that becomes effective in meeting? After all, we sit in meetings all the time. The third therapeutic grant is about everyone influencing each other (Forsberg & Wallmark, 2021). Only when relationships are affected by meeting does something happen. From a social constructionist perspective, this is about how different images are created and recreated in dialogue with each other and our agreements, the common understandings, are created in language. The changed interaction provides opportunities for new organization, new roles and increased flexibility (Gergen, 1985, 2015). The "Focused collaboration" that the informants describe may be the answer to how the changed interaction comes about.

The theme "Salutogenic Identity" brings the theme "Being Brave". In this way, they are different pieces of the puzzle in the answer to what is helpful, but they follow each other. In the study, we think it becomes clear that these themes are a continuation of the above process. Our experience is that it is not uncommon for the helping processes to end here. Everyone has met a few times and you have a plan. But in our study, our informants testify that this is where it starts. Then the families, the school and the therapists need to define who they want to be. Who am I and what do I stand for in this process. How can I, as an individual, dare? How can I, as a professional, help make a difference?

The last theme was important to highlight because our families clearly talked about how children need certain kinds of help quite immediately and that some processes need to take time. The theme was "Flexibility in time and space regarding interventions". The first sub-theme is about "Interventions that need to be taken care of urgently and in the right place". The immediate help that the informants describe as crucial is that there are important adults around who really care. Urgent needs can also be of a more practical nature, such as adaptations in the school in the form of a private entrance, a screen wall or to be taught with the help of your special interest. The second sub-theme is about perseverance and adherence in "efforts that need time to generate positive change". Some processes need to take time and need to be handled with timing among everyone involved.

10.1 Final discussion

In summary, the study results in six themes that have emerged in the empirical data. The study also shows that all six themes need to work together at the same time to treat or prevent the symptom of problematic school absenteeism. From a systemic perspective, each theme on its own would not make much difference. The whole is not the sum of its parts, but more than that.

When we look at the results of the study and at the themes in the sequence in which they are presented, they can together become answers to the inner and outer healing process that must exist, where each thing takes its time. In the study, it becomes clear that networks and relationships are crucial to get the student back to school. It becomes clear that behavioural problems are often associated with the lack of contacts in the network. The boundaries between these networks need to be bridged (Svedhem, 1991).

The goal of the network-based working models can be described as a dialogical understanding where communication is created between the different systems but also within them. A dialogical dialogue needs to take place, a dialogue where the speaker only owns half of what you have just said, the other half belongs to the audience, for reflection and reaction or comments. These comments become the internal structure of the speaker, which changes in line with the external dialogue, where several voices are heard at the same time (Seikkula,

2011, 1996). A new social construct emerges that generates a meeting, a contact. It goes from a monological and polarizing problem definition among family members and professionals, to a dialogue between these systems that includes a common language for experiences that do not yet have words. The conversations become therapeutic. The purpose of therapeutic conversations is not to solve the problem but to solve the problem-defined system. The problem disappears when a problem is no longer defined in dialogue (Seikkula, 1996), when it is no longer a problem to go to school 3 hours a week or to get adaptations at the right level. The system becomes meaning-making (Anderson, 2006), which generates an inner growth where identity and courage generate action that becomes change. This shift confirms a new self-narrative, which is constantly changing (Anderson 2006).

10.2 Method discussion

We hope that through this study we have done justice to our informants and that the reader has been able to follow the purpose and questions of the study. In the study, interviews have been used, individually and in focus groups, and the material has been transcribed and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. In particular, the study saw the benefits of collecting data through focus groups, where the school staff came from different contexts, which generated new knowledge through the interaction between the participants (Ahrne & Svensson, 2022). Transcription and a reflexive thematic analysis gave us a material that was extensive in quantity and content. As researchers, we became part of the material, which we influenced and it affected us. (Braun & Clarke 2022). As researchers, we have moved between the overarching themes down to the data material, towards the codes and sub-themes and back to the data material to lift our gaze again, to see the themes. This is in an ongoing flow. We hope that through this method we have answered the question of what has been helpful in getting back to school or learning.

However, the selection that was made went through the attendance team, both in the collection of families and school staff. The attendance team picked out a few families who had something to share, not just because they were happy, but because things had happened. The staff at the school were also dedicated staff who worked to get the students back to school. Is the study credible when selections are made in this way? No, not if the work of the attendance team were to be evaluated. But the purpose of the study was to investigate what all parties felt was effective in getting the students back to school and learning. They were free to tell us whatever they wanted that had influenced their return to school. Both families and schools were perceived to be free in their story. Accuracy regarding how the questions have been formulated has been found.

One out of three young people participated in the study. Family members were free to participate according to their strength and opportunity. The fact that two of the young people did not participate is understandable because they are in contexts in everyday life that take a lot of energy. When the families were invited, however, we were careful to point out that both the young person in question, siblings and parents were welcome and important. Perhaps data could have been obtained from these young people through a questionnaire where they were asked to rate statements about what was helpful. There was a discussion about collecting data by mail during the time that the study was ongoing, this had been gratefully received in the hope of getting the young people's voice heard but they wanted to be heard through their families.

10.3 Further research

Based on the results and the six different themes presented, it would have been interesting to carry out the study again, but with more informants, both families and other activities, such as BUP, habilitation and social services. It would also have been interesting to follow up on our results in this study after a few years to investigate whether what they now state has been helpful, holds up over time. To show that these extensive efforts and the network's commitment are needed, it would be interesting to compare students who receive treatment in the way shown in the study, with students who are offered treatment as usual.

It would of course be interesting if research is done on specifically problematic school absenteeism in combination with the ESSENCE concept. There is also a need for research on pupils that falls under the term "twice exceptional". There is a lot written about this but no research linked to school absenteeism.

List of references

- Ahrne, G & Svensson, P. (2022). *Handbok i kvalitativa metoder* (3 uppl.). Lieber AB.
- Anderson, H. (2006). *Samtal, språk och möjligheter, Psykoterapi och konsultation ur postmodern synvinkel*. Stockholm. Mareld AB.
- Anderson, H & Goolishian, H. (1992). *The client is the expert: A not-knowing approach to therapy*.
- Anderson, H & Goolishian, H A. (1992). *Från påverkan till medverkan. Språk och meningsskapande system i samverkan*. Stockholm: Mareld.
- Arvill Sverne E., Hjelm, Å., Johnsson, L-Å., & Sääf, C. (2021). *Etik och Juridik för psykologer och psykoterapeuter* (åttonde upplagan). Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.
- Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. Chicago & London: Ballentine Books.
- Braun, V & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research, a practical guide for beginners*. Companion website. SAGE.

- Braun, V & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. University of Auckland and University of the West of England. *Qualitative research in psychology*. 3. 77 - 101.
- Braun, V & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis, a practical guide*. SAGE.
- Corcoran, S., Kelly, C: A meta-ethnographic understanding of children and young people`s experiences of extended school non-attendance. *Journal of research in special educational needs*. (2022)
- Ek, H. (2018). *Psykiatriseringen av skolkaren, BUP och det institutionella omhändertagandet av ungdomar som inte går till skolan*. Institutionen för socialt arbete, Umeå Universitet.
- Egger, H L., Costello, E J., Angold, A. (2003). School refusal and psychiatric disorders: A community study. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*.
- Forsberg, G & Wallmark, J. (2021). *Nätverksboken. Om mötets möjligheter*. (3 uppl.). Stockholm: Lieber AB.
- Forsell, T. (2019). "Man är ju typ elev, fast på avstånd" *Problematisks skolfrånvaro ur elevers, föräldrars och skolpersonals perspektiv*. Umeå Universitet.
- Gillberg, C. (2018). *ESSENCE. Om AHHD, autism och andra utvecklingsavvikelser*. Natur & Kultur. Stockholm.
- Gergen, K. (1985). Social constructionist theory – context and implication. I: Gergen, K. & Davis, K. (red.). *The social construction of the person*. New York: Springer Verlag.
- Gergen, K. (2015). *An Invitation to Social Construction. Thousand Oaks*. Kalifornien: SAGE publications Ltd.
- Heyne, D., Strömbeck, J., Alanko, K., Bergström, M., Ulriksen, R. (2020). A scoping review of constructs measured following intervention for school refusal: Are we measuring up? *Frontiers in Psychology*. 11.
- Hoffman, L. (1985). *Beyond power and control. Toward a "second order" family systems therapy*. *Family Systems Medicine*. 3. 381- 396.
- Hårtveit, H & Jensen, P. (2005). *Familjen plus en; En resa genom familjeterapins praktik och ideer*. Scandbook. Falun.
- Ifous rapportserie (2019) 3, *Skolnärvaro, En översikt av forskning om att främja alla barns och ungas närvaro i skolan*. 2019:3 Stockholm.
- Kearney, C.A. (2001). *School refusal behavior in youth: a fundamental approach to assessment and treatment*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Kearney, C. A. & Silverman, W. K. (1993). Measuring the function of school refusal behavior. The School Refusal Assessment Scale. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 22.

- Kitzinger, J. (1994). The Methodology of Focus Groups: the importance of Interaction between Reserch Participants. I: *Sociology of Health and illness*. 16:103-121.
- Krueger, Richard A. (1993). Quality control in focus group research. I: David L. Morgan (red.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Linell, P (1994). *Transkription av tal och samtal: Teori och praktik*. Arbetsrapport från tema Kommunikation, 1994:9. Linköping: Linköpings universitet.
- Lindblad, I., Westerlund, J., Gillberg, C., Fernell, E. (2018). *Har alla barn i grundskolan förutsättningar att klara nya läroplanens krav?* Läkartidningen.
- Lyon, A, R., Cotler, S. (2009). Multi-systemic intervention for school refusal behavior: Integrating approaches across disciplines. *Advances in school mental health promotion* 2. Iss1, 20 - 34.
- McClemon, A. J., Morton, H. E., Gillis, J. M., Romanczyk, R. G. (2021). Brief report: Predictors of school refusal due to bullying in children with ASD and ADHD. *Journal of Autism and developmental disorders*. 51.
- Maturana, H.R. & Varela, F.J. (1992). *The tree of Knowledge: the biological roots of human understanding*. (Rev. Ed.). Boston: Shambhala.
- Munkhaugen, E. K. (2018). *School refusal behaviour in students with autism spectrum disorder: An exploratory study of frequency and associated factors*. Institute of clinical medicine. University of Oslo.
- Orm, S., Orm, C., Mebostad, M. I., Dechsling, A., Nordahl-Hansen, A. (2022). Confirming the Validity of the school-refusal assessment scale-revised in a sample of children with ADHD. *Frontiers in psychology*. 13.
- Rehn, P. (2021). *När det enkla ändå blir svårt - särskilt begåvade elever med autism och ADHD*. Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.
- Richardson, K. (2016). Family therapy for child and adolescent school refusal. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*. 37. Iss4. 528 - 546.
- Seikkula, J. (1996). *Öppna samtal, från monolog till levande dialog i sociala nätverk*. Mareld, Stockholm.
- Seikkula, J. & Arnkil, T E. (2011). *Sociala nätverk i dialog*. Studentlitteratur AB. Lund.
- Skolinspektionen (2016). *Omfattande frånvaro: En granskning av skolors arbete med omfattande frånvaro*.
- Skolinspektionen (2016). *Omfattande ogiltig frånvaro i Sveriges grundskolor*. Stockholm.
- Skolverket. (2021). *Nationell kartläggning av elevfrånvaro. De obligatoriska skolformerna gymnasie- och gymnasiesärskolan*. Rapport 2021:10.
- Stark, I., Liao, P., Magnusson, C., Lundberg, M., Rai, D., Lager, A., Nordström, S, I. (2021). *Qualification for upper secondary education in individuals with autism without intellectual diasability*. Total population study, Stockholm, Sweden. *Autism*. 25(4).

- Starrin, B & Svensson, P-G. (1994). *Kvalitativ metod och vetenskapsteori*. Studentlitteratur AB Lund.
- Svedhem,L (1991). *Socialt nätverk och beteendeproblem i skolan hos 11 - 13 åringar: en teoretisk och empirisk grund för nätverksterapi*. Karolinska institutet. Stockholm.
- Warren, C. A. B. (2002). *Qualitative interviewing*. I: Jaber F. Gubrium & James A. Holstein (red.) *Handbook of interview research: Context & method*. CA: Sage.
- Wibeck,V. (2010). *Fokusgrupper: Om fokuserade gruppintervjuer som undersökningsmetod*. Studentlitteratur AB. Lund
- Wilmot, A., Pizzey,H., Leitao, S., Hasking, P., Boyes, M. (2023). Growing up with dyslexia: Child and parent perspectives on school struggles, self-esteem, and mental health. *Dyslexia: An international journal of research and practice*, vol 29.
- [www.funktionskonsulten.se/blogg/2e- och-problematisk-skolfrånvaro](http://www.funktionskonsulten.se/blogg/2e-och-problematisk-skolfrånvaro).

Appendix 1 Parent questionnaires

10 parent surveys from 2019.

Evaluation of collaboration and SKIFO's efforts

Write in your own words, long or short. Please state your profession or if you are a parent or young person.

Submitted to the principal of the school no later than

My role (profession, parent or adolescent): Mom and Dad. Case (student's initials): xx

Describe what your cooperation/collaboration has looked like and what difference SKIFO has made since they came in:

SKIFO has opened new doors, another world has appeared. It's been fantastic to help xx move forward. It has been both with school and at home. My whole life has become more balanced and more stable for us parents and for xx.

SKIFO's commitment has been incredible and absolutely fantastic. We see the piece of the puzzle that SKIFO comes from outside and can help the school to do the right thing. Your commitment from SKIFO has created a whole for us parents, the school and xx from day 1. You couldn't be better.

We have experience that we are not taken seriously. We have been to a lot of meetings at schools and social services where we feel that they do not have confidence in us. It has been very difficult.

Since we met you, there was a reason to believe that it is possible and we could start supporting and helping xx in a new way, not just nagging. After SKIFO came in, xx started talking about how she wanted to go to school again. It's never happened before.

We have another daughter. xx herself says that she would never have gotten to where she is today, passed school with a few grades and been able to choose and get a place in this high school program without SKIFO. You have met her in a way that no one else has.

How would you rate the collaboration/collaboration with SKIFO on a scale of 1 - 4 where:

4

1 = should be developed 2 = developable 3 = functional 4 = well-functioning

Evaluation of collaboration and SKIFO's efforts

Write in your own words, long or short. Please state your profession or if you are a parent or young person.

Submitted to the principal of the school no later than

My role (profession, parent or adolescent): Mom and Dad. Case (student's initials): xx

Describe what your cooperation/collaboration has looked like and what difference SKIFO has made since they came in:

SKIFO was an incredibly good help to get an understanding of the situation we had with our daughter. SKIFO is the help we needed to get our daughter back to everyday life at school, incredible help.

SKIFO has been very helpful. Thanks to SKIFO, xx has grown and been able to get ahead and find his own way back to school, education and a future.

SKIFO helped us parents to be able to relax, they took care of the problem. The school has been helpful, but it was together with SKIFO that it worked out. SKIFO put his heart and soul into the school when it was paralyzed in the beginning.

SKIFO has been the support that BUP did not have. BUP did what they could, but without SKIFO we wouldn't have gotten as far with our daughter as we did. SKIFO made sure it went well all the way.

The school listened to SKIFO and they did a great job together. Thanks to the work that SKIFO put in, xx became safe.

Thank you so much for all the help.

How would you rate the collaboration/collaboration with SKIFO on a scale of 1 - 4 where:

1 = should be developed 2 = developable 3 = functional 4 = well-functioning

4

Evaluation of collaboration and SKIFO's efforts

Write in your own words, long or short. Please state your profession or if you are a parent or young person.

Submitted to the principal of the school no later than

My role (profession, parent or young person): Social pedagogue at the school. Case(student's initials): xx

Describe what your cooperation/collaboration has looked like and what difference SKIFO has made since they came in:

SKIFO has been a prerequisite for being able to work in a good way with xx as the problems surrounding her have required a comprehensive solution that is partly outside the school's mission.

Active parental work has been required to achieve a functioning family situation, which has also been a prerequisite for achieving sustainable schooling. In this work, SKIFO has been a necessity as the school does not have the opportunity to assist this.

SKIFO offers close cooperation and has a cross-professional function, which is very difficult to replace with anything else. That is, we have the opportunity to work on all levels with the student based on their needs and thus get a complete solution that is difficult to find anywhere else. In this case, it has been a fundamental prerequisite for success. The collaboration with SKIFO has made it easier to arrange meetings with everyone who works with young people, which helps us to see where we are right now and how we can work in the future in a very clear way. The work with some of our students often requires weekly, but sometimes also daily contact with the actors who work with the student outside of school; Here we have the opportunity in the collaboration with SKIFO to get a quick contact where everyone involved receives the same information from the same source. Since the collaboration around the student takes place in a smaller group and in close collaboration, the risks of misunderstandings occurring are significantly smaller, that confidentiality is maintained and that no information falls through the cracks.

A prerequisite for getting the student in this case to a satisfactory course of study and a good state of health, as for many others, has required, a clear structure, good adults and clear boundaries which the school together with SKIFO has been able to offer in a very good collaboration.

How would you rate the collaboration/collaboration with SKIFO on a scale of 1 - 4 where:

1 = should be developed 2 = developable 3 = functional 4 = well-functioning

4

Evaluation of collaboration and SKIFO's efforts

Write in your own words, long or short. Please state your profession or if you are a parent or young person.

To be submitted to the principal of the school no later than June 13 -19.

My role (profession, parent or youth): Study and career counsellor. Case (student's initials): xx, xx, xx

Describe what your cooperation/collaboration has looked like and what difference SKIFO has made since they came in:

I have had close feedback with educators, family therapists and social educators at SKIFO, mainly in terms of getting the students to see opportunities in the current situation, their future and to create motivation. This has been done through many conversations, internships, study visits, parent talks, etc. Through our collaboration, we have been able to work from different directions and with different perspectives, which has been very successful for the students.

A major success factor is the support and trust the young people and families have gained in SKIFO. By working with us on the home situation (parenting skills, opportunities, insight, views), they have also been able to help their children in the same direction. It has been incredibly valuable that they, among other things, helped the students, but also the families, to re-evaluate the school, the importance of our work and that they had many safe adults around them who work towards the same goal.

Through the collaboration with SKIFO, these students have regained their motivation and attendance in school, which in turn has given us the right conditions to be able to start school activities with them again.

Today, students see school as an important part of their lives and they look forward to high school. Today, 12/6, one of the students said "what else would you do if you don't go to school"? It definitely didn't sound like that a year ago.

How would you rate the collaboration/collaboration with SKIFO on a scale of 1 - 4 where:

1 = should be developed 2 = developable 3 = functional 4 = well-functioning

4

Evaluation of collaboration and SKIFO's efforts

Write in your own words, long or short. Please state your profession or if you are a parent or young person.

To be submitted to the principal of the school no later than

My role (profession, parent or adolescent): Mother. Case (student's initials): xx

Describe what your cooperation/collaboration has looked like and what difference SKIFO has made since they came in:

- For xx, SKIFO has been very important! SKIFO's social pedagogue has motivated her in his own way and helped her keep school and friends separate. SKIFO's educator has helped her to sort through her subjects and interests and to want to get to grips with her studies herself.

- For us parents, SKIFO has meant a great relief in being able to release the pressure of "getting the child to school" because that cramp is not helpful. They have also been able to help with what rights you have as a parent and what demands you can make on the school so that they meet xx's needs and she gets a school that she wants to go to herself.

How would you rate the collaboration/collaboration with SKIFO on a scale of 1 - 4 where:

1 = should be developed 2 = developable 3 = functional 4 = well-functioning

4

Evaluation of collaboration and SKIFO's efforts

Write in your own words, long or short. Please state your profession or if you are a parent or young person.

To be submitted to the principal of the school no later than

My role (profession, parent or youth): Special education teacher. Case (student's initials): xx and xx

Describe what your cooperation/collaboration has looked like and what difference SKIFO has made since they came in:

SKIFO has been a solution where they have worked with the whole child. As a teacher, SKIFO has been a very good sounding board and they have helped each other to raise problems with the family within their profession. As it has been a multidisciplinary collaboration, it has been possible to get help to remove obstacles outside the school and pedagogical work as well. I believe that it has been necessary to work together around our children in order to be able to respond to the home and make them understand how important their work is in the process of getting the children to be able to come to school and perform.

How would you rate the collaboration/collaboration with SKIFO on a scale of 1 - 4 where:

1 = should be developed 2 = developable 3 = functional 4 = well-functioning

4

Evaluation of collaboration and SKIFO's efforts

Write in your own words, long or short. Please state your profession or if you are a parent or young person.

To be submitted to the principal of the school no later than.....

My Role (Profession, Parent or Youth): Assistant Principal. Case (student's initials): xx, xx, xx

Describe what your collaboration/collaboration has looked like and what difference SKIFO has made since they came in:

I have been involved in SKIFO's work since March 2018. SKIFO has been there to support students and parents who have had difficulty either coming to school or when students have had a tough schooling. As I see it, SKIFO has made great efforts when it comes to working with parents at home. SKIFO has also worked well together to get the pupils to the school, together with special educators and social educators at the school. The teachers have not always been so satisfied with the help they have received from SKIFO because they have felt that they have not received the help they needed and felt that no one listened to what knowledge about the student they had.

But on the whole, it has worked very well and the girls who have been enrolled at SKIFO have had a good last year of school despite the difficulties they have had.

How would you rate the collaboration/collaboration with SKIFO on a scale of 1 - 4 where:

1 = should be developed 2 = developable 3 = functional 4 = well-functioning

3

Evaluation of collaboration and SKIFO's efforts

Write in your own words, long or short. Please state your profession or if you are a parent or young person.

To be submitted to the principal of the school no later than.....

My Role (Profession, Parent or Youth): Special education teacher. Case (student's initials): xx, yy

Describe what your cooperation/collaboration has looked like and what difference SKIFO has made since they came in:

I jumped in later so I don't have the whole picture and haven't really met SKIFO that many times. However, I believe that we have been able to discuss by mutual agreement, even though we may have had different opinions.

By the way, I've only had one supporting role so I haven't been able to influence that much.

How would you rate the collaboration/collaboration with SKIFO on a scale of 1 - 4 where:

1 = should be developed 2 = developable 3 = functional 4 = well-functioning

2

Evaluation of collaboration and SKIFO's efforts

Write in your own words, long or short. Please state your profession or if you are a parent or young person.

To be submitted to the principal of the school no later than.....

My Role (Profession, Parent or Youth): Special education teacher. Case (student's initials): xx, yy

Describe what your cooperation/collaboration has looked like and what difference SKIFO has made since they came in:

xx: Went to meetings with SKIFO's social pedagogue, talked about school and how I was feeling. I thought the meetings were great, because they helped me cope with going to school. I changed my school plan – I didn't have to go to a big class which I find very difficult.

If I hadn't had SKIFO, I wouldn't have gone to school at all. Mom and Dad think SKIFO is good and helpful.

SKIFO's educator has been talking about the school and how it is going. That it's going well, but some days it's been worse.

yy: Had meetings with SKIFO's social pedagogue and pedagogue. Then we've talked about school and stuff. With the Pedagogue we talk more about the school and how it is going now and with the Social Pedagogue we talk about all sorts of things, how it is going. The social pedagogue became more like a friend, we talked about everything.

If SKIFO hadn't existed, it wouldn't have gone so well. I don't really know what's the difference but I probably wouldn't have been in school.

Future plans: Both are going to high school, IM-yrk (theoretical subjects but focus on a specific job). Both have been accommodated on the desired programs as far as we know at present.

If we hadn't had SKIFO, we probably wouldn't have been in school and we wouldn't have gotten a good place in high school.

If we hadn't been in school, we probably wouldn't have gotten help with choosing an upper secondary school and then we wouldn't have had the opportunity to do what we want.

Evaluation of collaboration and SKIFO's efforts

Write in your own words, long or short. Please state your profession or if you are a parent or young person.

To be submitted to the principal of the school no later than.....

My Role (Profession, Parent or Youth): Mother and father. Case (student's initials): xx

For us parents, the conversations with SKIFO have been great. For xx, the conversations with everyone in SKIFO have been very good.

Good that SKIFO has been a unifying factor, synchronized the efforts, like the spider in the web, they have advised in everything around xx.

SKIFO has helped us parents to get things through around xx in school, made it easier for us but also been our voice.

The school has become better because of the work together with SKIFO. We see it in the way they work with their little brother. They work more long-term after collaborating with SKIFO.

In the beginning, everyone listened to xx and followed her. She had to decide too much. With SKIFO's help, they were able to reflect and have a better approach. The staff has been able to be more stable and it has become a security for xx.

SKIFO should be present in all municipalities so that children and young people can be helped to succeed.

How would you rate the collaboration/collaboration with SKIFO on a scale of 1 - 4 where:

1 = should be developed 2 = developable 3 = functional 4 = well-functioning

4

Appendix 2 Interview Questions

Questions for families

Can you describe what your and the young person's relationship to school/attitude to learning looked like before there was a change?

What were your expectations?

What did your contacts look like? What do you do? What do they do? What do you do together?

What does your relationship to school or learning look like today?

What was helpful to you in this process? When did it turn? What happened? Who noticed anything and what?

What do the contacts look like today?

Questions to SKIFO

How would you describe the three families in the study, when you came into the picture?

What assignment did you receive from the referrer?

What does it look like for these three students today in terms of attitude to school, attendance and/or learning things?

Questions for the school

What did your work look like for students with school absenteeism and absence, before any form of collaboration?

Why did you choose to turn to SKIFO for these particular students?

What do you think has contributed to the student having a different attitude towards school/learning/better school attendance today?

What do you think was helpful? When did it turn? What happened then? Who saw something and what?

Is there anything that has happened in the process, to you, to SKIFO, in the family, or all participants on the whole, that you think makes a difference for the students?

Appendix 3 Consent Letter

Informed consent for families, SKIFO staff and the school

We are two students at the Psychotherapy Programme with a focus on family and systemic oriented psychotherapy, at the Institute of Social Work, University of Gothenburg. In parallel with our studies, we also work as counsellors at the Child and Youth Habilitation Centre in Kronoberg and at Med tanken; Young people's mental health in Gothenburg. During the education, we will write an essay and as topics we have chosen to examine what parents, young people and professionals have perceived as helpful regarding young people's problematic school absences when they receive interventions from SKIFO.

We intend to investigate our questions by:

- In a focus group, talk to the staff at SKIFO.
- In a focus group, talk to the relevant school staff.
- Interview three families, each separately on the same issue.

We want to find out what SKIFO, the school and the families have found helpful in increasing the young people's school attendance or attitude towards learning. Each call takes about 1 hour to complete. We will record the calls in full. The conversations are used to answer our questions. When the essay is approved, we will delete all recorded audio files. The aim of the investigation is to ensure that no unauthorised person has access to the material. The research material will be stored in such a way that it is only accessible to those of us who are the investigators. In the reporting of the results in the form of a degree thesis at the University of Gothenburg, all information will be de-identified so that it is not possible to link the results to individuals.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may cancel your participation at any time without further justification or that any treatment is affected. As a participant, you have the opportunity to take part in the study when it is completed. Further information about the study can be

provided by us who conducted the study and you can reach us at the following e-mail addresses:
Maryamfetrak@hotmail.com and Susand2011@live.se.

Supervisor for the study is Karin Thorslund, Department of Social Work.

Karin.thorslund@socwork.gu.se

By signing the agreement, you agree to participate in this survey.

.....

Stenungssund February 2023

Maryam Fetrak and Susanne Andersson.