Students’ Perspectives on School-related Stress and the Role of the Student Health Services

2017

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Student thesis, Bachelor degree, 15 HE
Social Work
Study programme in Social Work, Specialisation International Social Work
Degree Project in Social Work

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Abstract

This study explored the view of a small-scale group of upper secondary school seniors on school-related stress during their last school year in comparison to previous years. A qualitative research method was used and five students partook in semi-structured interviews with open-end questions. The study derived from the perspectives of two theoretical models that were selected due to their relevance; firstly, the Demand-Control-Support model, and secondly, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. The results show that these upper secondary school seniors describe themselves as less stressed than they perceived themselves to be in their second year. Regarding the stress-related effects experienced by these students, it was found that sleep deprivation and anger were the most problematic ones along with their tendencies to compare themselves to others. It was also found that the five participants perceived the school health services’ work as insufficient in many ways. One of the most recurring suggestions, by the students, on how to improve it was to discuss stress and the availability of the school health services more openly.

Keywords: School-related stress, stress-related effects, youth subjectivity, upper secondary school
Preface

“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing it is stupid” -Albert Einstein.

Thanks to:
Pia Tham, our supervisor.
The teachers who helped us find our informants.
All the very talented students who partook in the study.
Fabiana Martinez and Alexander Madsen, for taking their time to proofread this paper.
Coffee, and our cats.
And last, but not least, we want to thank each other for doing a spectacular job.
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1. Introduction

Sweden is often praised for being a peaceful and safe country with advanced medical-, educational-, and welfare systems that protect its citizens. For a long time, the country has also strived to be the world's-leading “model” concerning the educational outlook. PISA was established in 2000, and according to their surveys, students’ results have, however, declined over the years (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2015). At the same time there has been an increased tendency for children and adolescents to suffer from psychological health problems such as sleeping disorders, depression, and different stress-related conditions (Wiklund et al., 2012; Antonsson et al., 2014). In Psychology Today, a clinical professor of psychology named Leahy (2008), also states that anxiety has increased. Leahy continues on by claiming that “the average high school kid today has the same level of anxiety as the average psychiatric patient in the early 1950s”. This negative development of psychological health problems is a serious matter, especially considering that it affects younger people as these inclinations often present themselves before students have reached higher educational studies or entered the labour market.

There are plenty of different factors behind students’ contact with school-related stress. There are concerns over grades, teachers, homework and isolation, but more specifically it may include worries due to unclear lessons, impatient teachers, fear of loss of friends, work overload, and peer pressure (McNamara, 2000). McNamara also mentions the parental pressure to perform and receive high grades, which can lead to stress induced difficulties. Further, there has been an ongoing discussion about the new grade system that was introduced in Sweden in 2011 (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2014). Some claim that it, in fact, produces more pressure because it has become more difficult receiving the higher grades than what it previously was. Bolling (2016) provides us with an example: if a student has fulfilled all criteria for an A, except on one assignment where she or he got an E, the student will not be able to receive a grade higher than a D. This induces the risk of youths becoming stressed, due to the fact that many will work even harder to obtain the higher grades in order to, for instance, be accepted to their wanted post-secondary studies. A stressful life can later lead to various health problems that have previously been brought up, and that will continuously be discussed throughout this paper.
A discussion concerning youths’ health has arisen over the years; it has become more common that young people take antidepressants for depression, anxiety, and other psychological health problems (The National Board of Health and Welfare, 2013). We wanted to explore why students may experience a declined health, and we wanted to focus on upper secondary school seniors. This, because it is arguable that the senior year might be the most stress-inducing due to the fact that it is a great step into adulthood that many might not be ready for. It is a step that might require decisions such as where to live, what to do, and how to finance one’s living. We also wanted to see what kind of help the students experience they can receive at their significant school. Relating this issue with international social work, we have, among other things, seen a more positive outlook for students in Finland (Jelmini, 2014). However, just like in Sweden, other countries have also noticed these problems among children and adolescents (Khan et al., 2015; Moksnes et al., 2016; Scrimin et al., 2014).

Hence this, the authors considered it to be of interest to investigate how a small group of upper secondary school seniors experience their school-time. Since there are quite many studies regarding the issue, but most of them are of quantitative character, the authors took interest in conducting a qualitative study to get a glimpse of the stories and experiences behind the numbers and statistics shown by others; subsequently, this study was carried out through five interviews with students attending the last year of their respective programmes.

2. Aim and Research questions

The aim of this study is twofold. Firstly, to explore how upper secondary school seniors’ may perceive school-related stress, and secondly, to explore how they may perceive the support the school offers regarding the issue.

- How do the interviewed students describe stress during the last year of upper secondary school, in comparison with previous years?
- What kind of stress-related effects do these students describe?
- According to these students, what kind of help does the school offer regarding managing stress and its effects?
2.1 Explanations of concepts

**Swedish upper secondary school:** This level of education consists of three years, and the students are often between 16-18 years old. The seniors are, hence, on their 18th year and many turn nineteen before they graduate. Swedish students choose what kind of programme they want to attend: theoretical preparatory (for higher educations) programmes [social or nature sciences] or more practical programmes [carpenters, mechanics, electricians etc], which, however, might still be preparatory (i.e. granting them the competence for higher education).

**The Swedish grading system:** The old grading system consisted of three different grades (excluding the grade F). The new system that was introduced in 2011, consists of five different grades (excluding the grade F).

**Stress:** In this study, the concept has a negative meaning because stress can cause decreased life quality and well-being.

**School-related stress:** This is the term that will be used for stress as a product of school itself: homework, grades, and so forth. Relations, such as those with teacher or peers, might also be regarded as stress-inducing and related to school.

**Stress-related effects:** A concept that refers to all the different outcomes stress might have upon students, e.g. headache, sleeping disorders, angers and so forth.

**External stress-related effects:** In this study external effects will include behaviours that are expressed outwards, e.g. difficulties to unwind (a constant active body), anger (yelling at others, on the verge of being mean), and obsessive behaviours (cleaning extremely often).

**Internal stress-related effects:** In this study internal effects will include behaviours that are directed inwards, e.g. subjectively comparing oneself to others, wanting others’ confirmation, and the feeling of being less adequate.
**Student Health Services:** The concept is used in this study as a collective term that includes school-nurses, -counsellors and possible psychologists. (In Swedish: Elevhälsa).

### 3. Previous Research

#### 3.1 National Research

Previous studies conducted in Sweden demonstrate that school-related stress, and its consequences, may be of great concern among children and adolescents. Several studies, quantitative as well as qualitative, show that a perceived lack of time in combination with too much to do is a common stressor (Brunström, 2008; Nilsson & Ryström, 2007; Rahmanovic, 2012; Nilsson & Herdmo, 2012). In one study, the majority of the students with this kind of problem, focused on the reasons behind their stress while the other students describe their stress as emotion focused. Female students were more common among the latter group (Nilsson & Ryström, 2007). According to Nilsson and Ryström (2007), the latter type of stress is far more complex and difficult to deal with as it is dependent on internal factors rather than more pragmatic, external ones. Emotion focused coping of stress can be described as the individual changing his or hers attitude towards stress, while problem focused coping means dealing with the causes of stress (Nilsson & Rydström, 2007).

Some studies show that anxiety, depression and sleeping disorders among adolescents, especially when it comes to girls, have increased (Antonsson et al., 2014; Wiklund et al., 2012). Common symptoms of stress are, furthermore, stomach problems, headache, anger/feeling irritated, which untreated can lead to severe sleep deprivation, problems with the digestion system, and burn-out (Hallberg Svensson, 2008; Kernehed & Thörnberg, 2007; Loeva, 2012). An interesting finding made by Brunström (2008) is the gender differences that can be found in her study of students aged thirteen to fifteen. Not only was the number of stressed girls larger in comparison to the number of boys, but the girls also rated their levels of stress as much higher than most boys did. This finding is further supported by a survey carried out by Statistics Sweden (2010) - *Statistiska Centralbyrån* - that showed that not only did inner pressure to
perform well increase with age, but it was significantly more common among girls regardless of age.

Some national studies have compared school-related stress between practical and theoretical programmes at upper secondary school (Kernehed & Thörnberg, 2007; Loeva, 2012). Their purpose was to explore if there was a difference between how the students perceived stress in their significant education. Kernehed and Thörnberg’s (2007) study shows that students in a theoretical programme experience more stress-related factors than those in a more practical programme. Continuously, they state that girls tend to be more stressed than boys, and further explains this by saying that girls have more need of control. In Loeva’s (2012) study, she could not detect a difference between theoretical and practical programmes. However, she continues on by explaining that the “practical students” do not have as much homework as the “theoretical students”. This then leads to the theoretical students having less spare-time which in the long run can increase the stress (Loeva, 2012).

How schools act to prevent and deal with stress among students is of high importance, which Brunström (2008) also emphasised in her study. However, the results showed that the measures taken at that particular school are made for individual students in need, and are often taken on the teachers’ initiative rather than the school’s. Brunström (2008) states that this is problematic as the lack of general preventive work means that the solutions found by individual teachers usually are very short-term, where there actually would be a need for continuous, long-term solutions instead. The fact that the responsibility lies on the individual teachers rather than the school is also problematic; especially as Nilsson and Ryström (2007) found that most students seek support among their peers or their parents. The number of girls who talked with teachers for support was about fifteen percent of the participants, and just above six percent for boys. This means that teachers, according to these results, are very unlikely to be aware of the problems and, hence, neither see the need to intervene.

Backlund (2007) investigated the student health services at randomly selected elementary schools and found that the role of school-nurses is quite institutionalised and a highly valued asset. Counsellors and psychologists’ place in school settings are, however, not as obvious. She further states that the role of the school-counsellor is rather distant as one fourth of the schools investigated had no counsellor at all or a counsellor who is shared with three
other schools. This disempowers the counsellor and leads him or her to getting a lower status (Backlund, 2007).

3.2 International Research
An international study, conducted in India, indicates - in contrast to the national studies mentioned - that schoolboys (14-18 years old) are much more stressed than schoolgirls (Khan et al., 2015). They explain that there can be many reasons for this and say that it may be because of the parents’ high expectations, or the boys’ own goals and future career target. This difference might, however, be connected to the cultural differences between Sweden and India.

The study “The Association Between School Stress, Life Satisfaction and Depressive Symptoms in Adolescents” conducted a school-based survey with 1,239 adolescents (13-18 years of age) in mid-Norway (Moksnes et al., 2014). The study shows that stress due to school performance was significantly related to depressive symptoms which was inversely related to life satisfaction. The result provides evidence that life satisfaction works as a mediator between its relationship to school performance stress and depressive symptoms. This is also evident in other studies; one, which was conducted in Italy, claims, for instance, that school-related stressors can, in fact, induce a negative mood within students (Scrimin et al., 2014).

In Finland, reality seems to be somewhat different to what the previous studies have depicted. Jelmini (2015), conducted an interview with the headmaster at a Finnish school. In the interview the headmaster said that their students have very good results, and explained that this might, partly, be because of the importance to detect, at an early stage, which students need more help in their studies; this is something they really encourage and emphasise at the school (Jelmini, 2015). Jelmini further expresses that Swedish schools have a tendency to “delay” these discoveries, because they do not want to label a child at an early age.

4. Coupling to theory
For this study, two theoretical models that are considered to be of high relevance have been selected. The first one is the Demand-Control(-Support) model by Karasek (Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Orth-Gomér & Perski, 2008). Secondly, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus will be utilised (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). These theories
discuss stress from different points of view, but complement each other well by covering both the interplay between the individual and its’ environment, and internal/external coping mechanisms.

4.1 The Demand-control model
The demand-control(-support) model (Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990) has had a great impact on the research world and has been used many times in order to try to diminish workload where there has been an overload (Orth-Gomér & Perski, 2008). The model is explained by Karasek (1979) as the need for balance between the demands of work tasks and the individual’s capability to live up to those demands and, by so, fulfill the task in a satisfactory way. In the control part of the model, the possibility for personal development is also included. If the demands exceed the control possessed, the individual will inevitably face “stress” (Orth-Gomér & Perski, 2008). The stress described by the model is, hence, due to a sense of powerlessness and inability to perform as desired, either by oneself or by external expectations. This aspect of the model is not only its main core, but it is also of particular importance in this context since many students in previous studies have described their experience of school-stress as a product of a lack of time in combination with an overload of tasks and assignments that became overbearing (Brunström, 2008; Nilsson & Ryström, 2007; Rahmanovic, 2012; Nilsson & Herdmo, 2012).

A way to counteract an imbalance between these two components is by the individual having effective social support (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). This can be achieved from managers or colleagues, family or friends. When including this, the model is referred to as the Demand-Control-Support model (Orth-Gomér & Perski, 2008). In this study, the role of teachers and peers as social support will therefore be of great relevance. This, especially due to the fact that, as previously mentioned, other studies have showed that teachers are seldom considered as a source of support by students (Nilsson & Ryström, 2007).

4.2 The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping
Lazarus and Folkman describe the transactional model of stress and coping as a theory that “views the person and the environment in a dynamic, mutually reciprocal, bidirectional
relationship” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:293). They explain that stress is neither in the environment nor in the person, but, in fact, a product of their interplay. Continuously, Lazarus describes the concept ‘stress’ as of heuristic value and is not in itself a measurable single factor (Hill Rice, 2012). Due to the fact that stress is described in this manner - that it is a result of a transaction between a person and their environment - it encompasses a set of cognitive, affective, and coping factors. Lazarus claims that there are different factors that influence whether or not a person will experience an event as discomforting (e.g. stress-producing); it includes the person’s abilities or capacities, resources available to the person in their environment, and norms that “define” where and how the individual can comfortably use these resources. The behaviour that responds to this event are called coping behaviour (Hill Rice, 2012).

Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) focus on psychological stress emphasise cognitive appraisal and centres it around the evaluation of harm, threat, and challenge. They explain that “an appraisal does not refer to the environment or to the person alone, but to the integration of both in a given transaction (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:294)”. They continue by saying that the context of someone being threatened is “a judgement limited to a particular person with particular psychological characteristics”.

A crucial part of this theory is the process that is concerned with the unfolding of events. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explain that an emotional state is never static. Our emotional life is constantly changing, just like our environment, and when encountering something our emotions work as an expression to what is happening. They say, “in a stressful encounter, one may feel at first anxious; after a few moments of further interchange, angry; then guilty; then loving and joyful (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:295)”. Hence the process of the event unfolds one’s own behaviour and the environmental alterations - this in turn alters the appraised significance of the encounter.

5. Methodology
Since this study is about attaining an understanding of the students’ experiences and perception, the researchers performed a qualitative study in order to achieve the personal experiences as is desired (Robson, 2007).
5.1 Research Design

Qualitative methods are normally used when the researcher(s) wish to collect data that is more in depth and subjective from few people. This opposed to quantitative methods that usually generate generalisable and more superficial data from a greater amount of participants, but that is related to numbers and statistics (Robson, 2007). Since this study was seeking subjectivity and personal stories, qualitative methods were found to be the most appropriate and likely to provide this type of understanding. Semi-structured interviews with five interviewees were carried out. A semi-structured interview is an interview technique particularly useful when there is a specific topic to cover, but that still provides the correspondent room to talk freely, and just steer them in the right direction. It is a method that enables the possibility to dive deeper into subjects that might arise and avoiding topics that might turn out to be too sensitive (Robson, 2007). This is important for this type of research as the consequences of stress may be considered to be very private and, hence, difficult to talk about.

This method proved to be quite useful as the participants brought up the matters that were of importance to themselves, which lead the interviews further on and onto new paths which were dove into as they arose. However, after the first interview it was noted that more questions were needed in case of the interviewee not being so talkative, and a handful more were, therefore, added. Each interview was estimated to take between forty-five minutes to an hour.

5.2 Mode of procedure

5.2.1 The Choice of Literature

The selection of literature used for this study ranges all the way from previous course literature used within the researchers’ study programme, to articles found through google that have been considered to be useful and relevant for the study. The two databases used the most have been DIVA as well as Discovery (through the University at Gävle). The keywords used were
“school-related stress”, “stress adolescence”, “coping stress”, and the equivalent expression in Swedish to easier find Swedish studies.

All sources used have been checked for their reliability by controlling a couple of their references including those found through Google and Google Scholar. However, the researchers have avoided to make use of Google as far as possible, but when unavoidable, the sources used therefrom have been carefully selected. Furthermore, only articles from established, impartial, state owned newspapers have been used.

5.2.2 Selection of Participants
The sampling method used for this study was the non-probability method called convenience sampling since the only requirements to be eligible for the study were 1) be studying the last year at a preparatory programme at upper secondary-level, and 2) be above the age of 18 (and if not, have the consent from a guardian). Convenience sampling means that the researchers will only reach out to those who meet the requirements to begin with. It is a sampling method often used for qualitative research when one has specific target groups whose personal views and experiences are the most important things; with this type of sampling the results are not possible to generalise to a wider context (Robson, 2007), which is not the purpose of this study.

One of the researchers contacted two of her previous teachers from upper secondary school explaining the nature of the study; the idea was for the teachers to approach the students collecting volunteers. As no student signed up as interested to take part in the study, a day and time was booked where the researchers could visit the classes and present the study themselves. The number of students that volunteered to participate exceeded the possible amount of interviewees, whereas the participants were chosen randomly.

5.2.3 Description of Investigation Process
The students selected were contacted by their contact method of preference (i.e. either their telephone number or email address) that they had provided when signing, to schedule a time for the interview. Of the five students contacted first, two did not response and a third had to cancel later on in the process. Another selection was made from the list of interested students and meetings were booked. Sadly, one of these had to cancel last minute due to sickness. One
of the interviewees, however, came to the meeting accompanied by a friend who was invited to take part in the study and accepted; a double interview was held with these two boys. This was considered especially valuable by the researchers, as (even though no generalisable data was going to be gathered) there had only been one boy who signed up. Having previous research in mind, it was considered to be of interest to see if there were any differences between how the different genders described their experiences even though no general conclusions could be drawn due to the small sample size of this study. The participants chose were the interviews would take place in order to be in their safe environment, whereas all of them chose settings in different parts of the school.

5.3 Tools of Analysis

All of the data collected was saved in form of recordings of the interviews, which then were transcribed. As there were difficulties to hear what was said during certain parts of the interviews, the transcriptions were checked by both researchers to ensure the reliability of them. Each researcher later compared all the recordings with the transcriptions. Thematic analysis was used, meaning that the transcriptions were read several times and analysed for patterns in the responses of the participants (Patton, 2015). The study’s research questions and chosen theories were considered when searching for these patterns. A colour code system was created in the word processing program used (Google Documents), this, in order to code the reappearing themes found during the analysis of the data.

Since all the interviews were held in Swedish, the quotes used to highlight specific phenomena, had to be translated. To ensure that the translations were properly made was of great importance; this, because it was understood that distorting the true meaning of what had been said was likely to not only affect the results, but also to endanger the credibility of the essay. Therefore, the quotes were translated carefully and were read between the lines to find what was actually being said, i.e. grasping figures of speech etc. Furthermore, the original and translated quotes were given to an English teacher of upper secondary school-level in order to ensure their truthfulness.
5.4 Essay Credibility

Regarding the validity of this study, there are some issues to take into consideration. Since quotes from the interviews have been translated from Swedish to English, the translations might affect how they are perceived, and some of the original meaning might be lost due to linguistic limitations. To prevent this, the study and quotes have been looked at by two persons who have studied English linguistics.

Robson (2007) states that the concept of reliability in qualitative studies can be somewhat complex as individuals’ experiences and feelings cannot be measured to the same extent as quantitative data. However, there are different methods of triangulation that can increase the reliability of a study; such as collecting data from different informants, applying different theories or models when analysing the data, having two or more analysts and so forth (Robson, 2007). In this particular case, triangulation of theories/models has been used as two theoretical models were applied to the data. Moreover, five students partook in the study, which all had different areas of specialisation, besides two. Furthermore, there were both boys as well as girls taking part. This means that the data was gathered from “different” kind of participants which, according to Robson (2007), also is a method of triangulation. However, this diversity among the informants is not to be mistaken for being a representative sample, because it is not. The diversity solely implies that different people, may have similar experiences. Generalisability, however, is most commonly not desirable in qualitative research since it is the subjective experience of the individual that is valued the highest, which also is the case in this study.

5.5 Ethical considerations

All participants, except for one, in this study were above the age of eighteen years to simplify the matter of consent to take part in the study. All of the participants above the age of eighteen have been informed and signed a form of consent where it was disclosed that their participation is completely voluntarily and may be discontinued at any time. The form also stated matters of confidentiality, i.e. that the results will be used for this study only. It also informed them that they are guaranteed anonymity throughout the processing of the data and presentation of it later
on; their study programmes and ages will, therefore, not be mentioned in order to make it harder to identify them, and they will be referred to with code names.

The one participant that was not eighteen yet was given the same information and consent form, but with the requirement that the guardian-section had to be signed and then mailed to the researchers. To simplify this, the student was given an envelope with a postage stamp and one of the authors’ address on it.

The risk that the topic could turn out to be quite sensitive to talk about for the correspondents was also considered, in which case the well-being and integrity of the participants were prioritised by avoiding to dig deeper into such matters. This was easier to do thanks to the semi-structured interviewing technique, as it allows to move fluidly between questions and relevant topics (Robson, 2007).

6. Results and Analysis

The participants are all studying their last year at an upper secondary school in Sweden. They have been given code names in order to preserve their anonymity. The names Anna, Beatrice, Cecilia, Daniel and Erik reflect the order of being interviewed. Hence, Anna - A - was the first interviewee, Beatrice - B - was the second, and so on. All of them, besides Anna, study different kinds of Art Programmes. Anna on the other hand, attends a theoretical programme focusing on overall social sciences.

The results have been divided into three main topics closely related to the research questions previously presented. This, mainly to make the content more comprehensible for the reader of the paper, but also to highlight the connection between the results and the aim of this study. Each topic is then, in turn, divided into two themes.

Each of the topics represent our research questions, and they are all listed and presented below.

1. The students’ perceptions of school-related stress
2. The students’ experiences of stress-related effects.
3. The students’ view on the support offered by the school regarding managing stress and its effects.
6.1 The students’ perceptions of school-related stress

6.1.1 Senior Year

The interviews showed that most of the interviewees perceived the senior year as less stressful and more exciting than previous years, due to more time being disposed to their respective programme specialisations. However, several of them also expressed that the senior year implicates more responsibility on their behalf and less teacher involvement. Beatrice explained:

They [the teachers] expect a lot from you. To take own responsibility and like that, they didn’t do that last year, but now they tell us […] “you can do this on your own now”. […] The bar has been lowered, but they expect us to be more independent.

The majority of the interviewees claimed that the second year of upper secondary school was, in fact, the toughest and most stressful one.

In the second year we had the most courses and lectures and all possible things so it felt like the hardest time by then. […] But the second year also there was a lot of lectures where one had to do several things at the same time so it became quite… stressful. (Cecilia).

When asked to describe upper secondary school, Daniel said:

Fun! […] Yes, it was quite hard during the second year because there was so much studying to do, but otherwise it is fun to go to high school.

Beatrice claimed that the second year was the hardest one, but further stated that she believed this perception to be due to what teachers and older students had lead them to believe with their warnings about the second year being the most difficult; hence, affecting their attitudes negatively.

If we were to get the same test today, I don’t think we would react the same way as back then [regarding the difficulty of the test].
However, Anna seemed to experience reality differently. When asked to compare the senior year to previous years she claims that it is calmer, but, nevertheless, a few minutes later she says that the stress has increased over the years. She explains this by confessing that she takes on the responsibility of a lot of activities - both school-related and during her spare-time:

The next upcoming thing is the studentflak\(^1\) and nobody cares, so I have to fix it because nobody else does. It is a lot like this in our class, that I have to do things since nobody else does it and then I become stressed because of it.

### 6.1.2 Grading System

One of the most recurring stressors throughout the interviews held was the students' expression concerning the high importance of grades and the pressure to perform well in school.

Subsequently, the new grading system that was introduced 2011 (Swedish National Agency of Education, 2014) was also a very discussed topic, and the opinions regarding it were not very appreciative. Anna perceived the new system as worse than the previous one and said that she believed that it [the system] requires too much of the students. It has, in a sense, become stricter and unfair and she thought that many other students would agree on this. In order to just keep up with the new system, Anna explained that the students need to constantly deliver which is very stress-producing. Beatrice said that it is difficult to achieve what one wishes to achieve, because of the fact that one’s grades are ruled by the knowledge the students are unsuccessful to show. On the same topic, Erik also said that one cannot simply have a bad day in school because this can later be reflected on your grade. In addition to this, Cecilia explained the demands of checking off every single criterion in order to receive the higher grades. Although the knowledge might be present, but one simply forgets to write something down, the grade will be judged on this single mistake. Hence, Cecilia expressed that the students will pressure themselves to make sure they have not missed out on anything. Daniel said:

Some students want an A, so they have to do a lot for an A, so they stress about it. [...] For instance if we’re writing like… an article, they have to write like twice as much as me [who doesn’t care about my grade]. So they have more work, more stress.

\(^1\)Studentflak is a Swedish tradition where the students drive around in a truck after their upper secondary graduation. The students usually have to arrange this themselves.
6.1.3 Analysis
Conclusively, it emerged during the interviews that these participants perceived the senior year as less stressful than previous years, whereas the second year was claimed to be the most stressful one by several of them. This is interesting as the researchers preconceived that the senior year would be more stress-inducing. This finding is, however, consistent with the Demand-control-support model (Orth-Gomér & Perski, 2008), as several participants mentioned that they experienced more control over the course of their studies in their senior year, as they are required to take own responsibility and be more independent. As Beatrice said, she perceived the demands to have been lowered but the expectations of their independence to be higher. This provides the students with more control and less demands, hence, also decreasing the stress experienced (Orth-Gomér & Perski, 2008).

This model is also applicable to the results regarding the grading system; the students claim that the “new” system puts too high demands on them in order to achieve the higher grades. Cecilia mentions the lack of knowledge when it comes to the criteria, which also implicates that the students do not possess the control they need in order to actually affect their schooling. As Orth-Gomér and Perski (2008) states, an imbalance between the perceived demands and control is highly stress-inducing and this explains why the grading system is experienced as stressful and unfair.

6.2 The students’ experiences of stress-related effects

6.2.1 External expressions
Many of the participants experienced difficulties to unwind and were constantly tense.

I always have difficulties to relax. It was like once when we were going to do an exercise during a theatre-class and we were supposed to relax and I felt “yeah, but how do you do that?” (Cecilia).
Due to this, their sleep might be affected negatively which can also be found in similar studies (Hallberg Svensson, 2008; Kernehed & Tjörnberg, 2007; Loeva, 2012). This was something that the majority of the students interviewed perceived as a problem.

If you get worked up and are doing something before you’re going to bed or something, it becomes harder to sleep later and you’re like… doing a homework and thinking “I should sleep” and you go to bed and are thinking about what you need to do and it becomes even harder to sleep and if you don’t sleep well that’s not good either (Cecilia).

Kernehed and Thörnberg (2007) explain this by saying that since the body is constantly active, the muscles have no possibility to relax even during rest.

Another stress-related outcome is anger, which seemed to be most common among the correspondents, although, it manifested itself in different contexts. Erik and Daniel, for instance, both claimed to become angry, on the verge to mean, towards their surrounding when facing stressful periods.

If I’m like, for instance, doing something and I’m in the middle of it and somebody comes and says something then I’m like “noo!” Then I become angry (Daniel).

Anna, on the other hand, said that she easily became angry and argued a lot with her mother, who she also perceived as quite stressed. She further explained the effects of her anger:

It [my well-being and anger] isn’t very good because my mum studies as well, she studies at the university by distance and she works at the same time so she also becomes easily stressed. So we… it is easy, at points, to end up arguing.

The source of stress for Beatrice, she explained, is to perform well in order to receive positive feedback. She expressed that this is especially noticeable after holidays when some might have used their spare-time to practice while others have not. At those times she said that she feels anger towards her teachers, and partially puts the blame on them for indirectly causing this stress. She expressed that she is angry that they do not encourage and praise everyone - but instead focus on the “good students”.

I think that it first and foremost is the teachers’ fault, and I can get very angry and say “But what
Another issue described by some of the participants was an overload of tasks that becomes completely overwhelming, causing them to become “paralysed” and, hence, not being able to do anything instead. This was especially problematic, according to Cecilia, one of the participants that experienced this type of problem, as she stated that stress becomes stress-inducing in itself when the pile of things to do grows unmanageable. This was especially problematic, according to Cecilia, as she stated that stress becomes stress-inducing in itself when the pile of things to do grows unmanageable.

Some may work better when they feel stressed and pressure; they get more motivated by it, but I myself ignore it [the assignments] and do nothing instead and that’s not good either. So, more problems…

(Cecilia).

Anna connected being paralysed in this manner to a sense of self loathe.

“I should do this, I have to do this”, but I don’t do it because it is too much so I’m like… I feel crappy since I don’t do anything, because it is too much that has to be done and then you don’t want to do anything instead.

In order to manage stress-related symptoms, people may find release in constructive alternatives such as physical training (Jonsdottir & Lindegård, 2007) which is an emotion focused type of coping (Nilsson & Ryström, 2007). An example of this is Anna, who exercised to find stress-relief, which is documented to be helpful since it uses the adrenaline that is produced by stress and can be used not only as a “treatment” but also preventive for stress-related symptoms (Nilsson & Ryström, 2007). Otherwise, the excess of adrenaline keeps the body and brain active, causing them to be unable to relax. This inability may sometimes take the form of anger, as previously discussed. However, others find release in more destructive ways (Grour et al., 1992). This might, for instance, take the form of different types of compulsive behaviour.
When I’m in a stressful period I become very orderly and I clean a lot and have a hard time relaxing because I need to have everything under control… so it is like, if I don’t perform well during a dance-class I have to clean and keep my room tidy when I get home (Beatrice).

### 6.2.2 Internal expressions

Continuing with the stress-related effects the participants experience, another factor that has emerged during the interviews is some of the correspondents’ subjective comparison to people around them. This has had a negative impact on the interviewees since they described themselves as feeling less adequate in comparison to friends, family or other people. They also expressed that they might receive more positive reinforcement from teachers or achieve higher grades, sometimes even with less effort than themselves. This could lead to further frustration, as Anna described it:

> My boyfriend, I don’t know how he does it, he never studies and always gets like… really high grades, which makes me even more frustrated. So I guess that contributes to my frustration as well, that he learns so easily while I’m sitting there not understanding anything. [...] I also have a younger brother and… he finds everything easier and gets so much better grades than I ever did.

She then further rationalised the situation concerning her brother, by explaining that he has Tourette’s syndrome, which she believed to be the cause of him learning much easier.

Cecilia expressed a similar thinking process as she stated that if a friend of hers is very clever, she became envious wishing that she would be as clever (according to her own standards). This, in turn leads her to thinking “Why can’t I be like that?”.

Beatrice, on the other hand, competes, in a way, with her fellow classmates regarding gaining the teachers’ confirmation, and she clearly compared the type of feedback they received. This desire of confirmation made her feel forced to do school-related activities during her spare-time and holidays, since she perceived it as a demand in order to get approval for her performance.

One can notice, if we have had a holiday break and when you get back to school you will notice who has practiced and who hasn’t, and then one will probably get positive feedback - if you do something positive of course - but that means you kind of have to practice in order to get positive feedback (Beatrice).
On another note, Erik claimed that he, in general, was not very stressed because he tends to ignore the grades - as long as he passes the courses he is satisfied. However, he provided us with an example from last year when he thought he might have been stressed out. He, himself, did not notice it – it was his surrounding – and it was actually his mother that ordered him to slow things down.

There was a time last year when I was really stressed, but I didn’t quite notice it because I was about to compete in the Swedish Championships [in magic] but had a lot to do in school at the same time [...] so it became very stressful in the end and I didn’t really realise… how much it actually was, so I became… well, yes, I believe I became quite mean to people around me without actually wanting to.

Erik has a hard time putting words to this experience. Since he did not notice how stressed he was himself, he stated that he could merely guess how he behaved towards others.

6.2.3 Analysis
There were two main themes that arose during the interviews concerning stress-related effects. A common effect, concerning the students’ behaviours, was that many of the participants claimed that they became angry during stressful periods. The Transactional model of stress and coping claims that the process of an event unfolds one’s own behaviour (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Continuously, it explains how our emotions work as an expression to what is happening. Hence, anger is a “product” of the stressful periods the participants experience. Further on, since the theory states that our own behaviour is the aftermath of an environmental event, it justifies why people react in different ways instead of just one conclusive and unified behaviour. Although most of the participants experienced anger; Anna, for instance, said that being stressed makes her paralysed in a sense (because there is too much to do). This is due to a form of pressure that is constantly present which creates the will to ignore it all - as a form of defence mechanism - and this, in turn, makes her feel even worse about herself (Freud, 1937).

To explain this in another way than the transactional model of stress and coping, the demand-control-support model can be used to describe anger as an outcome of irritation due to the high demands in school and the individual’s lack of capacity to cope. Subsequently, anger is not only a product of the deficient relationship between the participants and the school, but
also a product of a problem that may have existed for a longer period of time. In Erik’s particular case, he became very stressed (i.e. angry) when he had two big projects to address: school and the Swedish Championships. This led him to dedicate his spare-time to manage both, and in the end, it became too much to deal with. The demand-control-support model is of relevance in this case, as Erik states that it was neither the school nor the championships which became too overwhelming and stressful: but the combination of the demands of both at the same time (Orth-Gomér & Perski, 2008).

The other theme concerning stress-related effects was a variation of thoughts. Most of the participants, especially the girls, said that they often compared themselves and their results to others. Anna, for instance, said that in order to receive positive feedback from teachers, one needs to work harder and, hence, starts to compare oneself to those who receive the desired feedback. Stress is a product of the interplay between a person and its environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984); the interaction between students and the teachers are, therefore, of great importance concerning this. Our participants’ comparison to others can be seen as a consequence of this interplay error.

6.3 The students’ views on the support offered by the school regarding managing stress and its effects

6.3.1 The Support from the School
A common theme when discussing the support the school offers its’ students regarding stress-management, almost everyone said that they do not actually know where to turn to. The participants did not really notice the student health services - Cecilia was oblivious of its existence. Daniel claimed that he has never met - let alone seen - the counsellor. Continuing on a similar track, Anna believed that she (the counsellor) has never introduced herself in classes, “because that feels like something one would remember”.

Although, most of the interviewees seemed to not know where to turn to when it comes to coping with stress-related effects, Beatrice, on the other hand, perceived the school as quite good when informing the students about the school health services. She especially noticed this
by their encouragement to talk to one’s teacher if the students feel wrongly treated. Continuously, she said that there has indeed been a change in her dance-class regarding the previous lack of positive feedback. She said that nowadays, they tend to end the lessons with “Say five positive things you did during today’s class!”.

Another essential part of the school health services, besides the counsellor, is the school-nurse, that Beatrice described been of great support to her. She claimed that the nurse is present in school more often, while she on the contrary perceived the counsellor to be there quite seldom. She further explained the main differences she experienced between them and their availability:

She [the counsellor] seems to be a little worse kind of, I click more with the school-nurse since she is more available and feels more like a friend and is super nice, so you dare go to her. [...] With the counsellor it seems as you have to book an appointment and it feels too serious to me… I need to just go there spontaneously and be like “Hi can we talk?” and then decide to meet and talk every Tuesday, but now it feels hard to go to the counsellor and say “Hi I would like to book an appointment”. It feels very far away. The school-nurse feels more as a friend (Beatrice).

Not all students have been in contact with the school-nurse as much as Beatrice, though. Erik and Daniel stated that they both have met her, but only once. At the beginning of their junior year she visited their class and held individual meetings with all the students to talk about their health and well-being in general. Erik told us:

Everybody went there to talk to her [individually], and then we talked about things like “when do you go to bed?” and such, if we had any bad habits. But that was it. And the counsellor - I didn’t even know that we have a counsellor here, if I’m going to be honest [...] but it is good to know.

Erik was somewhat aware of the school health services’ existence - as previously stated, he has been in contact with the student-nurse - but he confessed that he was not the kind of person who, voluntarily, would seek help.

I believe there exists [somewhere to turn to], but I believe that I, personally… I mean, I don’t reach for that help. I believe that I… that I shut myself a lot if I’m stressed out. Therefore, I don’t have so much experience of asking for help because of stress (Erik).
On a similar note, Cecilia said that even though there most likely are help to receive, she does not believe most people are receptive to it.

6.3.2 The Students’ Suggestions

Since all persons learn in different ways, several of the students interviewed believed that the teaching methods utilised during lectures are likely to influence how much they learn, and hence, also how stressed they become. Many of them expressed a sense of not understanding what was being taught, causing them to feel anxious and stressed. One of the examples repeatedly brought forth concerning this was excessively long lectures that lacked interactivity with the students.

Both Anna and Cecilia sought a more active solution to this. Cecilia believed in a balance between listening and active participation; lectures can be good, she said, but not hours on end causing the student not truly being able to process the information. Anna continued on on the same note, and explained that she also learned better when being able to partake in the lessons.

It is arguable that the school should have flexibility and be adaptable to students different learning needs, something that Anna (who has reading difficulties) has experienced positively. She has seen a special education teacher regarding this, and she also informs us that Word has a service where you can have a text read out loud.

On the similar note as special needs, Daniel stated that he believed that a way to decrease the stress would be to have additional help for those who might need or wish for it. He informed us that they have this type of help for mathematics every Tuesday, but he also saw a need to have it with other subjects as well.

All the participants perceived there was a need for the school to be more active regarding the matter of stress. One of the greatest desires that arose during the interviews was for the school to have more focus on preventive work. Even though they find it hard to say what type of efforts would be most efficient, most of them agreed that the school needs to talk more about it and provide students with tools to cope.
There could be lectures [...] that bring up the topic and show that it is okay… I mean, to admit oneself stressed to be able to work on it (Erik).

6.3.3 Analysis

Both theories explain the importance of social support from either one’s workplace (in this case, school) or private life, as a method of counteracting stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Orth-Gomér & Perski, 2008). This is further supported in this study by Beatrice, who explained how the well-being of her class has increased drastically since their teachers began to put more focus on positive reinforcement and feedback. However, the majority of participants claimed that they believe that, they themselves as well as others, are not receptive to the support the school might offer. Whether these students find their social support among friends, peers or family members remains unclear. Sadly, their unlikeliness of accepting help from the school does not only discard a big source of support, but also the one source that is most likely to be able to actually make a change where needed in order to decrease stress-inducing factors.

When asked to describe what changes would be desired in how the school works with the issue of stress, most students perceived a need of more lectures and discussions about stress overall, which arguable implicates greater social support. Furthermore, the matters of adaptable teaching styles arose as several of the participants felt anxious and stressed as they perceived a lack of understanding on their own behalf. This has made them feel as they do not feel capable to live up to the demands. This is further explained by the demand-control-support model, as the demands are perceived as too high in comparison to the knowledge and capability of the individual (Orth-Gomér & Perski, 2008). Adaptable and variating ways of teaching could therefore, as expressed by the students, be very stress-reducing as it would increase the control experienced by the students (Orth-Gomér & Perski, 2008). To support this furthermore, the transactional model of stress and coping explains that in order to cope with stressful situations, students need these kind of resources in their environment otherwise the stress-related symptoms will develop even further (Hill Rice, 2012).
7. Discussion

The aim of this study was twofold. Firstly, to seek how upper secondary school seniors perceive school-related stress during their senior year. Secondly, this study also aimed to investigate their perception of the support offered by the school regarding stress. Although the results have given the study a relatively wide set of material, considering the small number of interviews held, the discussion section will focus on what the researchers consider to be the main results in response to the research questions. Firstly, one of the more surprising results was that the participants perceived the second year as more stressful than the senior year. The students described the senior year as a time where they finally can focus on their specialisation and, hence, their studies become more interesting. Concerning the stress-related effects, both their behaviour and thoughts were of great interest; more specifically: anger, sleeping-problems and their comparison to others. Lastly, a vital fact in it all is the matter of School Health Services - where they are lacking, according to these students, and the students’ ideas of improvements.

7.1 Method Discussion

A qualitative method has been used in this study; it was chosen because the researchers wanted to go more into depth within this topic, and gaining the participants’ subjectivity were of utmost importance. However, the qualitative method does not allow any generalisation of the results; this is important to remember and with this method the focus shall always be on the participants’ personal experiences.

When selecting participants, the convenience sampling method was used. This method is, as the names suggests, very convenient. However, it has been harshly criticised as it puts convenience primarily, rather than purposefully finding subjects that will be of most interest or that will yield most information (Patton, 2015). Patton further states that the use of convenience sampling can, therefore, be devastating to the validity of the results gathered. Nevertheless, as resources, such as finances, mobility and accessibility, were very limited, the method was used anyway.

The researchers initially contacted an old teacher to collect volunteers and then visited the classes in person. The volunteers signed their name and contact information on a piece of paper. Some were contacted, but did not respond. This can be perceived as them not being
interested in the first place, but instead feeling forced to sign it due to the fact that the researchers were in the same room. Through the convenient sampling the participants were collected from the same lecture, leading to many being in the same class. This is why most of the interviewees studied an art programme.

7.2 Result Discussion

The results found in this study can be seen as interesting, especially as some of them were unexpected, while others were awaited due to the findings of previous research.

The researchers were expecting to find that the senior year would be considered the most stress-inducing by the participants, mainly because of the authors’ own experiences but also because of the great step into adulthood that the end of upper secondary school implicates. However, this was the opposite as the participants claimed the last year to be the calmest, in contrary to the second year which was referred to as the toughest by almost all the participants. The only participant attending a theoretical programme, said that the stress has increased over the years. Although the small scale of this study is too narrow to draw any conclusions, a speculation regarding this difference between their experiences, is that it might be related to what was found in another study; the study conducted by Kernehed and Törnberg (2007) demonstrated that students studying a more theoretical programme at upper secondary school - rather than a practical one - are more stressed. Kernehed and Törnberg (2007) further claim that there are more factors behind their stress, and Loeva (2012) explains this by saying that the theoretical students tend to have more homework which leads to limitations of spare-time: in the long run this will only increase the stress even further. This could possibly explain why the one student studying a theoretical programme is the only one experiencing more stress and pressure, in opposite to the other participants who all study more practical programmes. Karasek (Orth-Gomér & Perski, 2008) further describes this through the balance between the demands and the individual’s capacity to live up to these demands. Hence, because of a bigger workload, this student may not have the capacity to cope with this which results in her feeling more stressed. However, this is impossible to say due to the small basis of this study and its lack of generalisability; this one student’s perception could be deriving from a completely different place. Another interpretation of this finding, could be that the art students’ senior year
mostly consist of courses concerning their specialisation. The previous years have had more focus on the theoretical subjects, which in turn leaves less time to focus on this specific interest, but as the third year emphasises their respective areas they are doing the thing that made them choose this programme in the first place. Hence, they are doing what they like and this can in turn diminish their stress.

Similar to what has been demonstrated in many other studies (Hallberg Svensson, 2008; Kernehed & Thörnberg, 2007; Loeva, 2012), participants of the present study experienced symptoms of stress, such as anger and sleep deprivation. They expressed an inability to relax that caused them to feel tense which later lead to difficulties sleeping. Sleep deprivation is a serious problem, and as a participant expressed during the interview ‘if you do not sleep, it will eventually affect your results which in turn produces more stress’. In the present study it was found that all three girls experienced trouble sleeping, while none of the two boys mentioned their sleep being affected whatsoever - they only saw anger and irritability as symptoms of their stress. According to Nilsson and Ryström’s (2007) study, it is more common for girls to suffer of sleeping difficulties than boys, and girls experience these difficulties to a greater extent as well. This difference is also brought up by Kernehed and Thörnberg (2007) who explain it by saying that girls have more need of control; this will lead to a more stressful reality which causes these problems. On the other hand, this could also be explained through the fact that the boys in this study claimed to not feeling stressed in general. Since the male participants had a more relaxed attitude toward school and grades, it is understandable that they may not suffer the same sleeping difficulties as the girls in relation to school.

Another subject that arose among the girls, and was described as highly affecting the well-being of them, was how they were very prone to compare themselves to others they perceived as better and more high-performing: sometimes without even putting in as much of an effort as themselves. This seemed to cause them a lot of frustration as they were eager to show themselves being just as competent as the others. Having the small sample of this study in mind, no conclusions can be drawn regarding gender differences. However, it is interesting that the ways in which the female participants described their experiences of stress are similar to the findings of larger studies; a survey found that girls are much more likely than boys to put a lot of pressure on themselves to perform well (Statistics Sweden, 2010). The fact that the
girls in this study show more signs of stress could be described through the demand-control-support model; the stress-inducing demands that they try to fulfil - which are what is making them stressed - are likely to be coming from themselves. However, no previous research has, unfortunately, been found that explains why girls put so much pressure on themselves.

When it comes to the student health services, most of our interviewees were either unaware of its existence or had never been in contact with neither the nurse nor the counsellor. Nevertheless, one student had been in a lot of contact with the school-nurse and had very positive experiences of this. However, both boys were oblivious of the fact that they even have a counsellor present at their school, and had much less never seen or spoken to her. The fact that they all knew about the nurse though, can be explained through Backlund’s (2007) study about student health care. In her research she found that the role of the school nurse is quite obvious in school-settings, whereas the counsellor tends to be overlooked and is less appreciated. As schools many times share one full-time counsellor, the schools are less likely to promote the counsellor in the same way as they do with their nurse. Backlund’s findings were seen in this study as well; Beatrice states that when she is in need of help and support, she seeks out the nurse instead of the counsellor since the nurse is more available and familiar. She further claims that the counsellor is not there as often; Beatrice has the need to simply drop-by instead of booking an appointment which is impossible with the counsellor’s schedule. A lot of students might share this wish, which can make them seek support among friends or family instead, while very few regard their teachers as a source of support (Brunström, 2008). As Brunström (2008) found that most schools do not have a common plan on how to deal with stress, the teachers are the ones that have to intervene in order for something to change. However, considering that most students do not talk with their teachers about such matters, it is problematic for the teachers to make proper assessments about their students well-being. This emphasises the importance of having established school health services in schools: partly, to take this responsibility from the teachers, but also to make sure that the students know where to turn to when in need. This was, after all, one of the most recurring suggestions the five students brought up during this study: to promote the school health services more and make sure that students know what kind of support they can be offered.
7.3 Suggestions for Further Research

With the limitations of this small sample and its lack of generalisability in mind, the participants’ descriptions have, however, a similar pattern to previous studies. What has become noticeable throughout this study, as well as previous ones, are that, also in this small scale study, there were differences between how the boys and girls described their experiences of stress (Brunström, 2008; Statistics Sweden, 2010). Hence, it would be of interest to study this topic further while investigating why these differences exist. Therefore, a suggestion for future studies is to focus on gender differences in relation to stress, the differences behind them and their implications.

Furthermore, as it in earlier research has been found that girls tend to be more stressed and put more pressure on themselves (Brunström, 2008; Statistics Sweden, 2010), the researchers believe it would be very relevant to investigate why they are more prone to be high-performing, but also where this pressure is deriving from to begin with.

This study has found different kinds of stress-related effects such as sleep deprivation, anger, and comparing oneself to others. Though these consequences are serious in themselves, it would also be of interest to see what these behaviours and thoughts can lead to in the long run. Hence, continue on the investigation of how students cope with their stress if going untreated.
8. References


9. Interview Guide

9.1 English translation

What do you study?
Why did you choose this program?
What are your future plans?
How do you experience your time at upper secondary school?
How would you describe the last year in comparison to previous years?
Several studies show that more young people are affected by depressions, anxiety, sleeping disorders, stomach problems and mood swings. What are your thoughts on stress?
Do you perceive that stress has affected you in any way? - In which ways can you noticed this?
In what situations do you experience more stress/pressure? The last time you were stressed, what kind of situation was it?
Have you been offered any kind of help in these situations? If so, how?
Do you believe you can get help and support from the school and the school health services if needed?
In which ways does the school work with stress and its effects? - Does the school discuss these issues openly?
In what ways would you like the school to work more with this?

(What are your thoughts about the new grading system? - If the topic is brought up)
9.2 Original - Swedish

Vad pluggar du?
Varför valde du detta program?
Vad har du för framtidsplaner?
Hur upplever du gymnasietiden (utveckla)?
Hur skulle du beskriva sista året i jämförelse med tidigare år?

Ett flertal studier visar att allt fler unga drabbas av depression, ångest, sömnproblem, magproblem och humörsvändningar. Hur tänker du kring stress?

(OM stressad) Upplever du att stressen har påverkat dig på något vis? - På vilka sätt kan du lägga märke till detta?

I vilka lägen upplever du mer stress? Senaste gången du var stressad, vad var det för situation?
Har du blivit erbjuden något slags stöd i dessa situationer, i så fall hur?
Upplever du att du skulle kunna få hjälp och stöd av skolan och elevhälso om du skulle drabbas av detta?
På vilka sätt jobbar skolan med stress och dess effekter? - Pratar skolan öppet om dessa problem?
Hur skulle du vilja se att skolan jobbade mer med detta?

(Vad är dina synpunkter på betygssystemet?) - Följfråga om vi glider in på det ämnet
The aim of this study is twofold. Firstly, to explore how upper secondary school seniors’ may perceive school-related stress, and secondly, to explore how they may perceive the support the school offers regarding the issue. We are interested in hearing what ways school might be stress-producing, and what kind of consequences the students might experience due to this.

In this study you will take part in a semi-structured interview, which will consist of a selection of questions. The interview will take about 60 minutes, and the interviewees will remain anonymous throughout our paper. The interview will be recorded, but the transcript will be kept safe.

REFERENCES:

Authors: Josephine Jerreholt & Zoe Chaparro Martinez
Students’ Perspectives on School-related Stress and the Role of the Student Health Services
University of Gävle, 2017


11. Consent Form

Bachelor Thesis

Students’ Perspectives on School-related Stress and the Role of the Student Health Services

This study is being conducted by Josephine Jerreholt and Zoe Chaparro Martinez to meet the requirements for the course Bachelor Thesis under the supervision of Pia Tham, department of social work, University of Gävle.

Consent Form

I have read the information sheet, and any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the research, on the understanding that I can withdraw from the research, at any time, and without consequence.

I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Name of participant: _______________________________________________________________ 

Signature: _______________________________ Date Signed: ___________________________
To guardian if the participant is below the age of 18:
I have read and understood the accompanying letter and information leaflet and give permission for the child (named above) to be included.

Name ________________________________________________

Relationship to child ____________________________________

Signature ______________________________________________

Name of Investigator: Josephine Jerreholt

Investigator’s Signature: ____________________  Date Signed: ______________

Name of Investigator: Zoe Chaparro Martinez

Investigator’s Signature: ____________________  Date Signed: ______________