

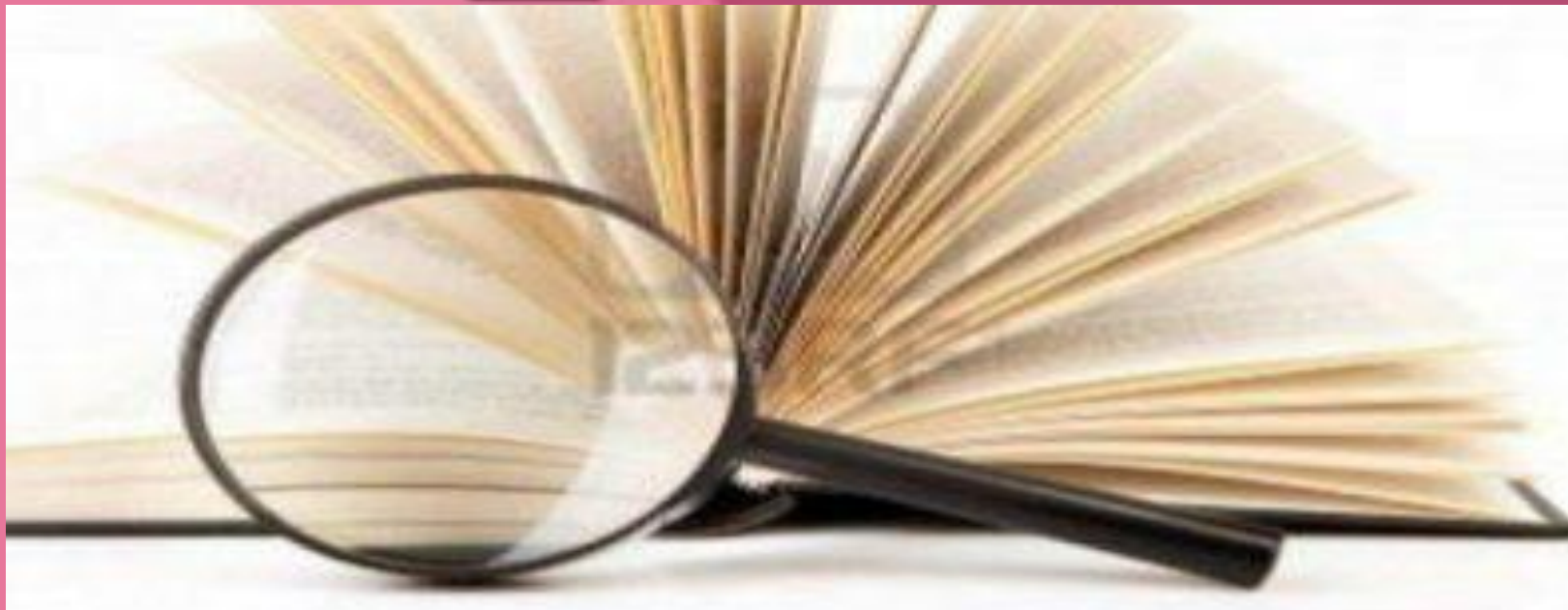
How Have Women with Autism Coped with their Study, at Greenwich University, during the Pandemic?

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Aim: to gain insight into the coping strategies of autistic women during the pandemic and their approach to studying during this time. What went well and not so well?

Objectives: to operationalise this aim.

1. What are the issues that affect women with autism?
2. How has the pandemic affected their study and progression?
3. Can best teaching practice during the pandemic support their study ongoing?



Literature Review

Review of the literature:

- This indicates a gap in research at present because studies have not specifically considered the effect for women with autism and their study during the pandemic at university.
- Although several surveys have been carried out to investigate the overall effect of the pandemic on disabled students at university.
- The National Autistic Society (NAS) have carried out a study about people with autism generally, and their families. This indicates that not only were people with autism let down, so were their families when they were left to cope, during the pandemic.



Methodology:

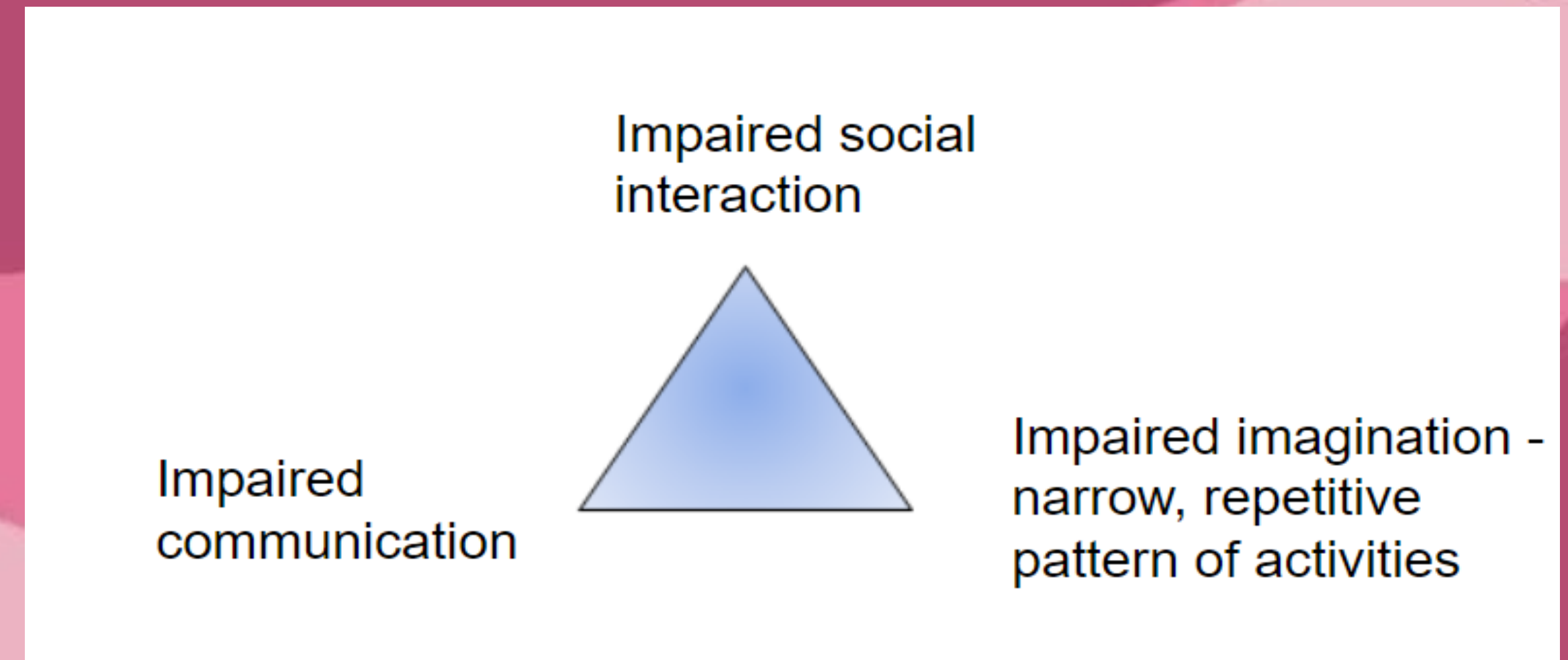
- To gather qualitative data of the lived experience of the women with autism studying during the pandemic.
- Interpret themes in the form of the written responses and hence narratives from the open questions in the questionnaire.
- Following on from the pilot study interviews and focus groups. (NOTE: Given correct ethical consideration and consent)

Planned outputs

- Discovering from their lived experience if women with autism, whatever the state of diagnosis, got the support during the pandemic, by any means.
- Did they achieve and progressed.
- What study skills support was accessed via university, DSA or family and friends to cope with How they coped with changes to study in online sessions for example during the pandemic.
- Did this support them or hinder them?
- Was there any best practice to take forward?

Background:

- Autistic women at university are likely to be those that are at the high functioning end of the autistic of the spectrum.
- Several studies suggest that these women do not have an identified intellectual disability and use executive functioning skills to disguise their autistic traits.
- This appears to complicate their lives, because the mainly male orientated assessments for autism traits
- Because the inherited ratio of male to female diagnosis is around 3:1.
- with the present triad of neurodevelopmental impairments displayed as lack of social interaction, poor social communication and restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour.



- Female traits also include masking, camouflaging and compensation to cover their autistic traits to fit into a neurotypical world making diagnosis more complex.
- Often co-occurring conditions such as anxiety, eating and sleep disorders and stress, because this is the result of the exhaustion caused by trying to fit in are diagnosed, many females go undiagnosed, misdiagnosed, diagnosed late in life or even self-diagnosed.



- Educational support therefore, can be inadequate, detrimental or damaging to their wellbeing and mental health.
- Being diagnosed with autism comes with support at university with the Disabled Students Allowance.
- Extra support from student finance England via an assessment process, gives access to study skills support, mentoring and educational technology and equipment, termed Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).



- The changes to study going online during the pandemic (Covid 19) via MS Teams etc.

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