How to complete the In-Class Practicals: An interview-based research project on excessive mobile phone use

This project is designed to be completed collaboratively by a whole with the teacher guiding each stage so that all participate and the activity can be done successfully in a minimal time frame. Students work together to design and carry out a small-scale, interview-based study on excessive mobile phone use.

Step 1: Introduction

- Teacher introduces the topic: *Excessive mobile phone use among adolescents*.
- The class discusses why this is a relevant and interesting topic and brainstorm for ways to refine it – perhaps 'excessive use' can be redefined as 'late at night' and instead of 'mobile phone use', perhaps 'social media' or 'gaming'.
- Students brainstorm how this behaviour affects teenagers' lives such as social interaction, sleep, concentration, mental health, FOMO, i.e. what is the problem?

Step 2: Develop a research aim and question

- Reach a consensus on a clear and focused research question (e.g. "How do teenagers perceive the effects of excessive social media use on their mental well-being?").
- Define variables
- Should the interview have open or closed questions? Or both?

Step 3: Design

Divide the class into small groups and each group is allocated responsibility for developing one component of the research project.

- **Group 1: Ethics**
    - Identify potential ethical concerns, e.g. consent, confidentiality, withdrawal, sensitivity of topic, data storage.
    - Draft an informed consent form and participant information sheet and a debriefing statement.
    - Make ethical notes for the procedure.
- **Group 2: Data collection tool (Interview guide)**
    - Develop 5-10 questions that explore the research question, with the study's aim as the focus.
    - Review the questions to ensure clarity and relevance – ask how each question supports the study's aim.
    - Test the questions on 2-3 students from another group in the class.
- **Group 3: Procedure**
    - Create the step-by-step procedure for conducting the interviews.
    - Create instructions, how to request the participant's consent, how to conduct the interview e.g. sitting standing, move to s separated space, debriefing, and data storage…
- **Group 4: Sample selection**

- Decide who the participants will be, e.g. peers in another class, members of this class – knowing the aim of the study doesn't affect the participants' responses.
- Discuss and justify the sampling method, e.g. random, opportunistic, purposive sampling.
- Set inclusion/exclusion criteria, i.e. people who don't have phones shouldn't be interviewed

Step 4: Presenting and finalising the study's design

- Each group presents their work to the class.
- The teacher facilitates feedback and final revisions.
- Final versions of all sections are compiled into a research plan.

Step 5: Conducting the interviews

- Depending on time and ethical constraints, either:
  - A few students conduct interviews using the agreed procedure, or
  - The whole class conducts interviews in pairs or individually (with teacher oversight and prior ethical approval). Perhaps in front of the class so other students can watch and make notes.

Step 6: Data analysis (keep this very brief because this is for learning not real research)

- As a class, review one or two transcripts (with identities anonymised).
- Identify recurring ideas or patterns.
- Practice coding and grouping codes into broader themes using thematic analysis.

Step 7: Discussion and reflection

- Discuss the findings as a class.
- Reflect on the research process: What went well? What were the limitations?

Step 8: Summary Document: Class Practical – Interview (to prepare students for Paper 2 Section A)

1a. Describe how you used an interview in your class practical and its aim and procedure.

Aim: To explore how adolescents perceive the effects of excessive mobile phone use on their daily lives and mental well-being.

Procedure:

- The class developed a set of 5–7 open-ended interview questions.
- Participants were selected using purposive sampling (e.g. teenagers who regularly use mobile phones).
- Informed consent was obtained from all participants (and from parents, if the participants were under 16yo).
- Interviews were conducted in a quiet, private setting, either by individual students or in pairs.
- Interviews were recorded or notes were taken.
- Data was later transcribed and analysed using basic thematic analysis to identify common patterns and ideas.

1b. Explain the concept of bias in relation to the interview in your class practical.

Bias is any factor that distorts or influences the accuracy or neutrality of the study's data.

Examples of bias in this interview study:

- **Interviewer bias:** The tone, wording, or body language of the interviewer may have affected/distorted the participant's responses.
- **Social desirability bias:** Participants may have understated excessive phone use to appear more responsible.
- **Sampling bias:** The sample may not have been representative, e.g. most participants were students from the same class, age, culture, socioeconomic group…

1c. Compare and contrast the research methodology of an interview used in your class practical with the research methodology of an EXPERIMENT / OBSERVATION / QUESTIONNAIRE.

Comparison of Research Methodologies

Feature	**Interview**	**Experiment**	**Observation**	**Questionnaire**
Primary focus	Thoughts, feelings, and subjective experiences	Cause-and-effect relationships	Naturally occurring behaviour	Self-reported behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes
Question type / approach	Open-ended, flexible	Standardised tasks and conditions	No questions; uses observation schedules or checklists	Mostly closed questions, with some open-ended
Type of data	Rich, descriptive, and thematic	Numerical, statistical	Descriptive and/or frequency-based	Mostly numerical; some qualitative from open-ended responses
Ecological validity	High (natural conversation)	Can be low (artificial setting)	High (natural behaviour observed)	Medium (depends on honesty and understanding)
Control of variables	Low	High	Low	Low
Replicability	Lower (depends on interaction)	High (standardised procedures)	Low to moderate	High (if structured consistently)
Bias risk	Interviewer and social desirability bias	Reduced through randomisation and controls	Observer bias; participant reactivity	Social desirability bias; misinterpretation of questions
Ethical considerations	Requires consent, confidentiality, and sensitivity	Consent essential; monitor for stress or deception	Consent (especially if covert); avoid invasion of privacy	Anonymity and informed consent; clarity in questions
Strength	Deep insight into individual experience	Strong for testing hypotheses under controlled conditions	Reveals actual behaviour rather than self-reports	Efficient for collecting data from large samples quickly

Feature	Interview	Experiment	Observation	Questionnaire
Limitation	Time-consuming; harder to analyse objectively	May lack real-world relevance	Interpretation may be subjective; ethical concerns possible	Limited depth; relies on participant honesty

Conclusion

- **Interviews** are best for exploring personal, subjective experiences and gaining information about individual perspectives.
- **Experiments** are good for identifying cause-and-effect relationships in controlled environments.
- **Observations** are useful for capturing real behaviour, but they lack access to internal thoughts and may raise ethical challenges.
- **Questionnaires** balance efficiency with breadth of data but may miss the nuance of experiences and are subject to bias.

1d. Design an OBSERVATION to investigate the same topic you investigated in your class practical.

Aim: To observe how often and in what contexts teenagers use their mobile phones during non-instructional time at school.

Type of Observation: Naturalistic, non-participant observation during break or lunch times.

Procedure:

- Identify specific public locations for observation, e.g. cafeteria, school playground...
- Create a checklist of observable behaviours, e.g. phone use (looking/reading/listening/engaging), while eating, in conversation, alone...
- Observe students at set intervals over several days.
- Record frequency and duration of phone-related behaviours.
- Ensure observations are unobtrusive and that no identifiable information is collected or recorded.
- Obtain approval from school leadership and inform students that an observation study is taking place, without revealing the exact behaviour being studied (to reduce reactivity/participant biases).

1d. Design an [EXPERIMENT] to investigate the same topic you investigated in your class practical.

Aim: To investigate the effect of mobile phone use on students' concentration while completing a cognitive task.

Design: Independent groups experiment.

Procedure:

- Recruit two groups of similar-age students
- Randomly assign participants to one of two conditions:
    - **Experimental group:** Complete a short reading comprehension task while receiving phone notifications.
    - **Control group:** Complete the same task with no phone present or notifications.
- Measure performance based on task accuracy and/or completion time.

- Debrief participants and explain the aim and results of the study after data collection.

Variables:

- **Independent variable:** Presence of phone notifications (yes or no).
- **Dependent variable:** Concentration/performance score on the task (consider time but add a penalty for errors so that there is one DV not two).

Ethical considerations:

- Informed consent
- Right to withdraw
- Ensure no harm or stress from task pressure etc.

1d. Design a [SURVEY/QUESTIONNAIRE] to investigate the same topic you investigated in your class practical.

Aim: To collect data on how often adolescents use their phones and how they believe this affects their mood, sleep, and academic performance.

Design: Self-administered anonymous questionnaire using both closed and open-ended questions.

Sample Questions:

1. On average, how many hours per day do you spend on your phone? (0–1, 1–3, 3–5, 5+)
2. What are the top three things you use your phone for?
3. Have you ever felt anxious or uncomfortable when you didn't have access to your phone? (Yes/No)
4. How often do you check your phone during class or study time? (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)
5. In your opinion, how does phone use affect your sleep quality?
6. Please describe how phone use impacts your academic performance.

Procedure:

- Distribute the questionnaire online or in class.
- Ensure responses are anonymous and voluntary.
- Collect and analyse data using simple statistical methods (for quantitative data) and thematic coding (for open-ended responses).

Ethical considerations:

- Informed consent
- Anonymity and confidentiality
- Right to withdraw at any point