Plan Overview

A Data Management Plan created using DMPonline

Title: How do neurodivergent university students experience creative activities as a form of self-expression and wellbeing?

Creator:Hollie Lister

Principal Investigator: Hollie Lister

Data Manager: Hollie Lister

Affiliation: University of Plymouth

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Project abstract:

This qualitative research explores how neurodivergent university students engage in creative activities (e.g. art, music, writing, dance, photography) and how these relate to self-expression and wellbeing. Neurodivergent students may experience heightened stress and overwhelm in academic environments. Existing literature suggests that wellbeing can be supported through engagement in meaningful occupations, which may promote identity development, emotional regulation and participation in daily life.

While creative activities are widely associated with emotional expression and improved wellbeing, research involving neurodivergent students often focuses on academic performance, support needs or deficits, limiting understanding of lived experiences of creativity.

Using an open-ended questionnaire, this study aims to explore how students use creativity for emotional expression, regulation and everyday coping. The findings aim to enhance understanding of student wellbeing from lived experience and inform more inclusive and non-medicalised approaches to support within higher education.

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How do neurodivergent university students experience creative activities as a form of self-expression and wellbeing?

Data Collection

What data will you collect or create?

This study will collect qualitative data via an online open-ended questionnaire hosted on JISC Online Surveys (the University of Plymouth-approved platform). This is the only survey provider that is accepted by Univeristy of Plymouth and maintains GDPR-compliant data storage.
Approximately 10-20 participants will take part. Participants will be Univeristy students aged 18 and over who identify as neurodivergent. The data will consist of anonymised written responses exploring engagement in creative activities and their relationship to self expression and wellbeing.
No existing or third-party will be used. Data will be exported from JISC in .csv format and stored securely on password-protected device with appropriate backup and restricted access. Codes and themes will be in .doc format.

Data volume is expected to be low to moderate given the sample size. Findings may be disseminated through academic outputs/ or university-approved channels, including social media or other public engagement platforms, subject to university approval and data protection requirements.

How will the data be collected or created?

Data will be collected via an open-ended questionaire via JISC Online Surveys. Participants will complete written responses which will be securely stored within the JISC platform before being exported for analysis. No additional data collection tools will be used.

Data will be exported in a secure electronic format .csv and stored on encrypted University of Plymouth systems via Onedrive. Files will be structured using clear and consistent folder naming (e.g. “raw data”, “processed data”, “analysis”). Individual participant responses will be anonymised using ID codes (e.g. P1,P2, P3) to ensure confidentiality.

Documentation and Metadata

What documentation and metadata will accompany the data?

Documentation will include the study title, researcher details, data collection dates, participants inclusion criteria, questionnaire questions and consent materials. Participants will be assigned id codes. These records will provide sufficient context for the data to be understood in accordance with university ethical and data protection requirements

Ethics and Legal Compliance

How will you manage any ethical issues?

Ethical issues will be managed through informed consent, anonymisation, and secure data handling. All participants will be presented with an information sheet and consent form prior to the questionnaire. Informed consent will be obtained electronically prior participation Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw at any point prior to submitting their response.
All questionnaire data will be anonymised, with names and identifying details removed and replaced with codes. Responses

will be stored securely on a password-protected device and only accessible to the researcher and supervisor. All participants data will be deleted upon completion of research. All information collected will be treated confidentially and used only for the purposes of this research.

The research will be submitted for approval through the relevant university ethics process before any data collection begins, ensuring compliance with institutional ethical standards. All data will be used solely for academic purposes and will not be shared beyond the research team.

GDPR training has been undertaken by the researcher.

How will you manage copyright and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues?

This study will generate original primary data and will not use third party datasets. The data will only be used for the purposes of this dissertation and any approved dissemination of findings. Findings may be used in future academic outputs (publications) if deemed appropriate and in accordance with participant consent and ethical approval.

Storage and Backup

How will the data be stored and backed up during the research?

All research data will be stored securely using university-approved storage systems (onedrive) with automatic backup enabled. Data will be saved and stored via supervisors shared onedrive cloud storage, which can only be accessed by supervisor and researcher.

Backups will be carried out regularly throughout the research process, at least weekly during periods of active data collection and immediately after new documents are added. This will ensure that no data is lost or overwritten.

No data will be stored solely on a single laptop or unencrypted external device. Access to all stored data will be restricted to the researcher and supervisor only, and all storage locations will comply with university data protection and security requirements.

How will you manage access and security?

Access to all research data will be strictly limited to the researcher and supervisor. Data responses and collected documents will be stored on password-protected university-approved systems. Files will be encrypted where possible and stored in secure, access-controlled folders. Participants will be anonymised, and any identifying information will be removed or coded in documents. No data will be shared with third parties, and files will not be stored on unsecured personal devices or publicly accessible platforms. Access permissions will be regularly reviewed to ensure data security throughout the research process.

Selection and Preservation

Which data are of long-term value and should be retained, shared, and/or preserved?

The anonymised questionnaire responses will be retained as the primary research data in accordance with University of Plymouth data retention requirements. No identifiable data will be retained beyond what is necessary for the research. The dataset is not intended for public reuse, although anonymised findings may be included in the dissertation and approved dissemination activities. If the findings are considered to have wider value, they may also be used to inform future research outputs such as publications or further academic work, in accordance with participant consent and ethical approval.

What is the long-term preservation plan for the dataset?

There are no plans to make the dataset publicly available. Anonymised questionnaire responses and associated coding notes

will be retained securely on university-approved storage for the required institutional retention period following submission of the dissertation. The data will not be preserved for future reuse and will be permanently deleted in accordance with university data management policies. While the dataset itself will not be reused, anonymised findings reported within the dissertation may contribute to future academic dissemination.

Data Sharing

How will you share the data?

The data collected in this study will not be publicly shared. Access will be restricted to the researcher and supervisor. Anonymised findings may be included in the dissertation and my appropriate future academic dissemination activities.

Are any restrictions on data sharing required?

Data sharing will be restricted to protect participant confidentiality and comply with GDPR and University of Plymouth ethical requirements. All questionnaire responses will be anonymised, and access to the data will be limited to the researcher and supervisor. No public sharing of the raw dataset is planned. Only anonymised findings will be reported within the dissertation and any approved dissemination activities.

Responsibilities and Resources

Who will be responsible for data management?

Hollie Lister

What resources will you require to deliver your plan?

Resources required include Jisc Online Surveys for data collection, University OneDrive for secure storage, and Microsoft Excel and Word for data management, analysis, and dissertation write-up. No additional specialist resources are required.