

An Exploration of Entrepreneurial Anxiety in the Context of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

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ABSTRACT

For the small to medium-sized enterprise (SME) entrepreneur, it is an everyday experience to be worried about the enterprise. Worry is an aspect of anxiety and worrying about individual, team and organizational issues are inevitable aspects of an entrepreneurial SME's existence. SMEs are organizations with 0–250 employees and considered to be important to the UK economy. However, there is still limited research on the impact of the emotion of anxiety on SME entrepreneurs and their businesses.

This research was designed to help broaden understanding of emotions and entrepreneurships by focusing on anxiety in the entrepreneurial SME context and how anxiety could affect SMEs. Following on from the literature review of the concept of emotions, anxiety, social defence and paradox theory, an interpretivist, and therefore, qualitative strategy was adopted. The data was sought via focus groups, interviews and questionnaires of SME business owners/entrepreneurs and staff. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis. The findings yield rich data from participants about their feelings, experiences and perceptions of anxiety from personal (micro), social/group/team (meso) and organizational (macro) levels.

The findings show how, for the SME business owner/entrepreneur and for entrepreneurial SME staff, the emotion of anxiety has negative and positive impacts, creating paradoxical tensions, and the social defences at the personal (micro), social/group/team (meso) and organizational (macro) levels. This is shown in the conceptual framework which visually illustrates the interconnectedness of the paradoxical contradictions and tensions mobilized by and mobilizing entrepreneurial anxiety at the three levels.

Thus, this thesis provides a new contribution in emotions and entrepreneurship research. This contribution to knowledge is crucial because it moves the literature beyond the focus on passion as a key entrepreneurial emotion as illustrated in the current literature (Cardon et al., 2012). Entrepreneurial anxiety is introduced as an equally important entrepreneurial emotion essential in entrepreneurship. This knowledge is critical as it provides insights on how entrepreneurial anxiety can impact the survival, change, growth, decision-making and learning of an SME organization.

DECLARATIONS

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original, except where indicated by specific references in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other educational institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed

Dinipre Dee Allen

Date: 28th August 2018

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First, I thank God for my life and for carrying me through this academic journey. I am reminded of the verse in the Bible that encourages us not to worry or be anxious. In a way, that passage is a paradox because by encouraging us not to worry, the verse is acknowledging that we might become worried and anxious about situations. This thesis acknowledges this inherent fact, but from entrepreneurial and SME organizational perspectives. Through this academic study, I have learnt so much about entrepreneurial anxiety, an experience which I went through as a former SME entrepreneur.

Second, I am dedicating this thesis to Professor Tony Gear, my second supervisor who supported me relentlessly with wisdom, understanding and patience. Tony sadly passed away in September 2017. Tony, I know that you will be so happy to see this thesis finally submitted.

I have other key individuals to thank who have supported this thesis:

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and Background of Research

The purpose of this doctoral thesis is to gain an in-depth insight into the experiences of the emotion of anxiety in the context of entrepreneurial small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and to contribute to the knowledge in this area of study. In this chapter, the background and rationale for this study is provided below. In section 1.2, the research aims, questions and objectives are covered, and the significance of the research is explained. In section 1.3, definitions of the key terms—SME, Organization, Emotions and Anxiety—are provided. Sections 1.4 to 1.7 provide the synopsis of the thesis, covering the literature review, methodology, findings/analysis, discussion, contributions and conclusion. Sections 1.8 and 1.9 illustrate the structure of the thesis and summarize the chapters.

As a former SME entrepreneur/business owner who co-founded a human resources and training business, I naturally experienced different emotions during the start-up, development and changes in the business which ran for a period of 10 years from 2002 to 2012. A key emotional issue for me was the constant anxiety associated with the business such as taking new business risks, winning new clients, finances, business growth, recruiting staff, moving locations around the United Kingdom (UK) to seek new opportunities and threats of business closure. Therefore, I developed an interest in exploring this issue further in an academic environment and enrolled in the doctoral course at the University of Gloucestershire. Consequently, in 2012, as a former entrepreneur and business owner with access to other SME entrepreneurs, I was given the opportunity to plan and lead a University of Gloucestershire funded pilot research project on SMEs. In this project, the SME business owners/entrepreneurs were asked to give their views on their experiences of the emotion of anxiety within their businesses/organizations in order to gain an initial understanding of what anxiety meant for them. The participants were all experienced entrepreneurs/business owners within a variety of small to medium-sized business environments, including

professional services, insurance, retail, construction, graphic design, consulting, lighting manufacturers, electrical contractors, interior designers and project management services. The SME entrepreneurs and business owners were first interviewed in a focus group and asked to share their views on anxiety. The focus group research formed the pilot for this PhD thesis and led to the development of the PhD research questions and objectives (see section 7.10 in Chapter 7 for a detailed background information about myself, the pilot project and my PhD journey).

1.2. Research Aim, Questions, Objectives and Rationale

The aim of this study is to investigate the feelings, perceptions and experiences of the emotion of anxiety for SME entrepreneurs/business owners and within an entrepreneurial SME organization. This research intends to contribute to new theoretical knowledge and inform practice in an area of study that has had limited academic focus (Allen, Gear, & Vince, 2017, see Appendix K).

The research questions for this thesis, which was influenced by the initial pilot study, are as follows:

RQ1. What is meant by the emotion of “anxiety” for SME entrepreneurs/business owners and staff in an entrepreneurial SME?

RQ2. How are the feelings and experiences of “anxiety” interpreted by entrepreneurial SMEs?

RQ3. How is “anxiety” manifested at the different relational levels—namely micro (entrepreneur, personal, individual), meso (interpersonal, team, group) and macro (organizational)—within a case study medium-sized entrepreneurial SME?

Using an inductive approach, new knowledge is created, and practice is informed by achieving the following objectives:

RO1. Understand the underlying emotions of anxiety in organizations, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial SMEs.

RO2. Explore the feelings, perceptions and experiences of anxiety of entrepreneurs/business owners and staff and what they mean in an entrepreneurial SME through interviews and focus groups.

RO3. Assess anxiety within the organization from the perspectives of the different relational levels in the entrepreneurial SME organization.

The aim, questions and objectives are designed to help broaden research on emotions and entrepreneurship by focusing on anxiety in the SME context. This thesis takes a different perspective from studies that have focused on emotions attached to the individual entrepreneur, on how emotions influence cognition, or on either the positive or the negative effects of emotions. The focus of this study is specifically on the emotion of anxiety. The research questions and objectives aim to provide insights into the interplay between the positive and negative aspects of anxiety as an emotion in SMEs and how these could affect issues such as survival, change, growth, decision-making and entrepreneurial learning.

1.3 Key Definitions and SME Organization Information

In this section, the background information on the case study entrepreneurial SME, definitions of key terms such as anxiety, organization and SME are provided.

1.3.1 What is an SME?

The definition of SME and the criteria used in deciding if the venture is a SME for the purposes of this thesis is based on the general UK government definition which uses the number of employees and turnover of the SME as follows:

• Micro Business = less than 10 employees and turnover under £2 million
• Small Business = less than 50 employees and turnover under £10 million
• Medium Business = Less than 250 employees and turnover under £50 million

Table 1.1 UK definition of SME. Source: Gov.uk (2012)

The following table shows the definition of SMEs as provided by the European Commission (2015). In the European Union (EU), SMEs are generally defined as businesses employing between 0 and 249 people and with a turnover of €50 million or less, as illustrated in Table 1.2:

Company category	Employees	Turnover	Or	Balance sheet total
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ €50 m		≤ €43 m
Small	< 50	≤ €10 m		≤ €10 m
Micro	< 10	≤ €2 m		≤ €2 m

Table 1.2 EU definition of SME from European Commission (2015)

1.3.2 What is an organization?

An organization is an entity that has been structured to achieve a collective purpose and is influenced by internal and external factors. Morgan (2006) used various metaphors such as “brain”, “machine”, “psychic prison” and “culture” to describe an organization and therefore provided a deeper understanding of organizations. Schein (1990, 2010), for example, describes organizational culture as the assumptions, beliefs and values of the organization. Ashkanasy, Wilderom and Peterson (2000) and Reichers and Schneider (1990) have conducted studies describing the idea of “organizational climate”, which is distinct from the concept of organizational culture (Morgan, 1983, 2006; Schein, 1990, 2010). They state that the concept of organizational climate constitutes the collective mood/emotions of organizational members toward their jobs, the organization and management. Thus, the concept of organizational climate is relevant to this study as it also focuses on the impact of anxiety as a collective mood/emotion of entrepreneurial SME members towards their jobs, the organization and management.

1.3.3 Background of the case study organization

The entrepreneurial SME chosen for the in-depth case study in this thesis was founded in 2002 by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) with the support of an organization known as Opportunity International. The SME provides insurance for customers in developing countries that have no access to insurance due to poverty. They serve over forty

million people in Africa and Asia. Initially, with the support of Opportunity International, it received a multi-million-dollar grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to fund the insurance policies of their underprivileged customers, whose income and financial survival relied on these insurance policies.

The organization became an innovative entrepreneurial business that changed its business model from a not-for-profit social enterprise to a for-profit innovative business. This was at about the time the current Chief Operations Officer (COO) joined the business. Following the business model change, the SME attracted current investors such as AXA, IFC, Omidyar Network and Sanlam. The SME also partners with over ninety banking and microfinance partners, seventy insurance partners and twelve telecoms partners to reach its customers. Eighty-five per cent of their customers are new to insurance. The head office is based in Cheltenham, UK. It has satellite offices in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and the Philippines and has approximately one hundred and fifty employees worldwide, with over thirty-five employees located in its UK head office at the time of this writing. The organization currently falls into the category of a medium-sized business in accordance with the EU and UK definitions. All its activities are managed and operated from the UK office. All heads of department and core staff are in the UK. Its executive board consists of the founding CEO, COO and two directors. In this study, data has been collected from staff based only in the UK head office.

1.3.4 What is the emotion of anxiety?

“Affect” is used as an umbrella term when discussing emotions and the different types of subjective feelings that contribute to the experience of emotion (To, Tse & Ashkanasy, 2015). Anxiety is an example of an emotional experience (Vince, 2010). For the purposes of this research, anxiety is defined by using the common understanding of anxiety: a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. “Anxiety is fear without an object. Something to be avoided or controlled as it “incites the feeling of being uncomfortable” (Salecl, 2004, p.18). This definition of anxiety focuses on situational or state anxiety and not anxiety proneness/ disorder which is a trait anxiety.

The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) created by Spielberger and Gorsuch, (1983) is a universal self-report test commonly used as a measure to assess state and trait anxiety. Spielberger and Reihseiser (2009) explain how state and trait anxieties are differentiated in the STAI. State anxiety is defined as fear, nervousness and discomfort induced by different situations arousing the autonomic nervous system, whereas trait anxiety is more of a personal characteristic encompassing feeling of fear, stress, worry and discomfort that are experienced daily, leading to anxiety proneness. Cacciotti and Hayton (2015) argue that fear and anxiety are terms that are often used interchangeably, but they are distinct. A very useful self-help guide provides more insight on the differences between anxiety and fear. Psychologically, worry that leads to anxiety and fear starts from different parts of the brain, and these are states of mind that can form a sequence of emotions as shown in the diagram below:



Figure 1.1 Anxiety/Panic sequence of emotions (www.psychology-solution.com)

According to Psychology- Solution (2016), anxiety is defined as “a set of responses to an unknown, imprecise or ill-defined threat; often anticipatory in nature and created by the imagination”. Worry is described as the “thought process that leads to feeling the emotion of anxiety” (Paragraph 3). This definition supports the view of Barrett, Mesquita, Ochsner and Gross (2007) that the feelings and experiences of emotions are neurologically distinct. Fear and panic are defined as the “set of responses to a known, precise, well defined threat, which can be real or vividly imagined. In its extreme form, fear becomes panic” (Psychology- Solution, 2016 paragraph 4). The concept of anxiety is further discussed in section 2.4 of Chapter 2 where the focus is on state and trait anxiety.

1.3.5 What are the experiences of emotion?

The literature on the subjective experiences of emotion has been developed (Lambie & Marcel, 2002; Sabini & Silver, 2005). However, Barrett et al. (2007, p. 373) argue that due to the currently prevailing paradigm dominated by “American psychology's behaviourist legacy”, having knowledge of the causes of emotion is often seen as enough. On the contrary, Barrett et al., (2007) suggest that we need to understand the

experiences and the feelings of emotion, not just the causes. This study adopts this premise in seeking to understand the descriptions of the feelings and experiences of the emotion of anxiety, but also seeks to understand the definitions of anxiety given by the research participants. According to Elfenbein (2007, p. 13), the experience of emotion is described as “the psychological and physiological sense of being affected emotionally by an event”. Studies on emotions have also focused on the social and relational aspects of emotion, for example, group emotions (Barsade, 2002; Menges & Kilduff, 2015) in the organizational context. This study also focuses on the emotion of anxiety from a social and relational perspective within an entrepreneurial SME. The emotion of anxiety is a key focus due to the gap in the literature (Allen et al., 2017).

1.4. Introduction to the Literature Review

The research questions and objectives required an understanding of SMEs, entrepreneurship, emotions and anxiety in organizations. The literature review is in Chapter 2 of this study. Following an analysis of definitions of SMEs and entrepreneurial SMEs in particular (see sections 2.2 and 2.3), the literature on emotions in organizations in general is reviewed (see section 2.5) and is then followed by the literature on anxiety in organizations (see section 2.6). In addition, it was also necessary to review the literature on emotions and entrepreneurship as the case study in this thesis includes SME entrepreneurs and an entrepreneurial SME organization (section 2.7). The existing literature specifically on anxiety in SMEs is limited. This section provides a synopsis of the literature review.

1.4.1 Emotional experiences in organizations

Emotions in the context of work and organizations is considered as a discipline which must be studied. Fineman (2003) argues that organizations are “emotional arenas” where organizations unite and divide their members, and emotions characterize and inform organizational processes. Schipper (2009, p. 161) also contends that “organizations are sometimes seen as overly rational, but more attention should be given to the soft side, including feelings and emotions.” Voronov and Vince (2010, 2012) and Vince (2018) stress the importance of including an analysis of emotional

and unconscious processes in the study of institutional work. The literature on emotions in organizations is discussed in more detail in section 2.5 of Chapter 2.

1.4.2 Anxiety as a personal and social emotion in organizations

Anxiety can be constructed relationally and socially. The concept of anxiety as a personal and social emotion is explored in this study to gain an in-depth understanding. Research on anxiety in the organizational context has focused heavily on social defences against anxiety (Jaques, 1955; Kets de Vries, 1996, 2004; Krantz, 2010; Long, 2006; Menzies Lyth, 1960). For example, Kets de Vries (2004) discussed the concept of social defences, which was described as a system of relationships (reflected in the organizational or social structure) constructed to help people deal with persecutory and depressive anxiety. Crane (1980) also explored the presence of anxiety from an organizational perspective and concluded that anxiety was an endemic factor in organizational membership.

One of the first studies to identify the functioning of defences against anxiety was Menzies Lyth's (1960) research into nursing services in a general hospital. She found that organizational approaches to scheduling, decision-making and work assignment were fragmented and depersonalized to help the nurses deal with the anxieties associated with their work. Like the study by Menzies Lyth (1960), this thesis also explores the function and impact of anxiety and social defence in the entrepreneurial SME context.

Anxiety has positive and negative effect. For example, Rosen (2008) suggests, anxiety can motivate and discourage entrepreneurship. Yet, in the literature review on anxiety in organizations, I have found limited information on the causes, experiences and feelings of anxiety at the different levels of organizations and in entrepreneurship. However, the literature on entrepreneurship and emotions generally is emerging (Cardon et al., 2005). This is discussed further in section 2.7 of Chapter 2.

1.4.3 Entrepreneurship and the socially embedded nature of emotion

As the interest in emotion and entrepreneurship develops, it is becoming valuable to know more about the functioning of emotions, both individual entrepreneurs' emotions as well as interpersonal, group and social aspects embedded in enterprises (Delgado

García, De Quevedo Puente and Blanco Mazagatos, 2015; Doern & Goss, 2012, 2013; Goss, 2005a, 2005b, 2008). Goss (2005) suggested making social situations the analytical starting points for fresh and potentially valuable insights into the nature of entrepreneurial behaviour. Doern and Goss (2012) show how socio-emotional processes act as barriers to entrepreneurship. Doern and Goss (2013) proposed a model showing how negative and positive emotions influenced by social interactions can impact entrepreneurship. The social aspects of emotions and entrepreneurship are elaborated further in section 2.7 of Chapter 2.

Articles in the academic literature that deals specifically on emotions and entrepreneurial decision-making are limited but developing. These articles show how emotions are embedded in entrepreneurial decision making. For example, Ucbasaran, (2007) also assessed entrepreneurial decision making and cognition. Brundin and Gustafsson, (2013) conducted an experiment to investigate SME entrepreneur's investment decisions and the impact on emotions during periods of uncertainty. Thus, revealing how positive and negative emotional situations impacts on entrepreneurial behaviour and entrepreneurial decision making. Therefore, it would be interesting to know how the emotion of anxiety impacts on entrepreneurial decision making for SME entrepreneurs, but the literature in this area is limited and requires attention (see section 2.7.1. in Chapter 2).

1.4.4 Anxiety and entrepreneurship in the context of SMEs

This thesis aims to contribute to knowledge about anxiety and entrepreneurship, as well as to generate insights about the ways in which anxiety is socially embedded within entrepreneurial SMEs. There is currently limited literature on the relationship between anxiety and entrepreneurship. One reason which has already been discussed earlier in this chapter (see section 1.3.4) is that fear and anxiety are terms that have been “used interchangeably to describe the same psychological phenomenon” (Cacciotti & Hayton, 2015, p. 168). Another reason is that social anxiety is often suppressed (Kashdan & Breen, 2008), which has limited researchers' ability to point towards the distinctive features of anxiety and the impact of this emotion on entrepreneurship. This thesis, therefore, provide insights on understanding entrepreneurial anxiety in an entrepreneurial SME context

1.4.5 Literature on using a multi-level perspective in research

A multilevel approach to anxiety means that entrepreneurial emotion within SMES and the interconnections across levels can be highlighted and insights gained. Shepherd (2011) encourages the use of multi-level research on entrepreneurial decision making, for example, and other multi-level and cross-level issues in the entrepreneurship domain. According to Douglas Creed et al., (2014), the interplay between the personal, social and organizational aspects of anxiety in enterprises is central to a better understanding (see section 2.9 of Chapter 2).

1.4.6 Literature on using paradox theory

A paradoxical lens has been applied by researchers to gain an understanding of the contradictions and tensions in a wide range of topics, and some of this research is discussed in more detail in section 2.10 of Chapter 2 .Paradox theory can provide a meta-theoretical perspective (Lewis & Smith, 2014; Schad et al., 2016) with which to study anxiety and entrepreneurship. Paradox theory invites scholars to consider *both/and* rather than *either/or* perspectives on contradictory organizational phenomena (Lewis, 2000). Using paradox as an overarching theoretical perspective could help to identify how anxiety informs contradictions and sustains the interplay between underlying forces of entrepreneurial behaviour and action. The conceptual framework in this thesis is informed by the paradox literature and discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

1.5. Methodology

In the methodology chapter (see Chapter 3), the focus is on how the research philosophy affects the research approach and design. The process of data collection and analysis are explained. Issues of reliability, validity, generalizability, triangulation of sources and saturation are briefly covered. The ethical consideration and analysis of the findings are also discussed. Using an inductive, qualitative approach, the research objectives are achieved by exploring the feelings, perceptions and experiences of anxiety for SME entrepreneurs/business owners and staff in an entrepreneurial SME organization using mainly interviews and focus groups.

1.6 Findings and Discussion

The findings and analysis of the research data supports the existence of the contradictions and paradoxical tensions of anxiety at the different levels in SME organizations and confirmed that it is socially embedded. The in-depth analysis of the pilot focus group of SME business owners and entrepreneurs (phase one), twelve one-to-one interviews with SME entrepreneurs and business owners (phase two) resulted in the creation of an initial research framework that required an understanding of personal, social and organizational anxiety. The case study organization data (phase three) and analysis confirm and reveals the existence of anxiety at the micro, meso and macro levels with paradoxical tensions. Social processes in organizations are affected by anxiety in the form of social defences. Therefore, for SME organizations, the findings show that anxiety is part of people's excitement at the potential of the enterprise, and this encourages and supports collective action. Such feelings exist alongside reluctance, mixed feelings and the perceived negative consequences of taking risks, growth, making decisions and change. See Chapters 4, 5 and 6 for the detailed findings, analysis and discussion.

1.7 Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis explores the ways in which anxiety functions within SMEs and develops a conceptual model of entrepreneurial anxiety. The purpose is to highlight the impact of anxiety and, particularly, to point towards tensions, contradictions mobilized by and mobilizing anxiety at different levels personal (micro), social (meso), organizational (macro). The originality and value of this thesis is that it adds something distinctive to research into emotions and entrepreneurship because anxiety is not an emotion that has been studied in this context.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 elaborates on and develops the literature review on the nature of the emotion of anxiety for SME entrepreneurs and business owners in organizations and particularly entrepreneurial SMEs. It looks at the role of emotions in organizations and entrepreneurship, anxiety in organizations and the defences against anxiety. This

chapter also discusses the literature in relation to the use of a multi-level research methodology, followed by analysis of the existing literature on paradoxical tensions and social defences as these concepts influence the final theoretical framework and contribution of this thesis.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used to carry out the research.

Chapter 4 details the findings and analysis of the pilot study of the group of SME entrepreneurs (phase one), followed by the one-to-one interviews of the SME entrepreneurs (phase two).

Chapter 5 details the findings and analysis of the in-depth longitudinal study of one of the entrepreneurial SME organizations (phase three).

Chapter 6 discusses the themes from the findings, with an analysis on how the findings and themes shed light on the literature from the literature review and how the findings and themes contrast with the literature. In essence, the discussion shows how the key themes from the findings and literature answer the research questions.

Chapter 7 shows how this thesis contributes to knowledge and introduces the proposed concept of entrepreneurial anxiety, explaining the theoretical influences of social defence theory and paradox theory, as well as their significance to theory and practical implications. Some reflections on the PhD journey/study is also provided. Below is Table 1.3 which shows the structure of the thesis:

Chapter 1 Introduction
Chapter 2 Literature Review
Chapter 3 Methodology
Chapter 4 Findings for phases 1 and 2 of data collection
Chapter 5 Findings for phase 3 of data collection
Chapter 6 Discussion of the findings with reference to the literature.
Chapter 7 Conclusion and the contribution to knowledge made by this thesis. Reflections on the PhD journey is included in this chapter, followed by the references and appendices.

Table 1.3 Structure of the thesis

1.9 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the background and reasons for the PhD study were explained. The research aims, questions and objectives were provided with the key terms defined. The chapter then gave a synopsis of the thesis, covering the literature review, methodology, data analysis/findings, discussion, contribution and conclusion. The detailed literature review will now be considered in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

In this chapter, a review of the selected literature on topics relevant to the research aim, questions and objectives are discussed and synthesized. As the research questions focus on SME entrepreneurs and an entrepreneurial SME organization, the definition of SMEs, their importance and characteristics of entrepreneurial SMEs and SME entrepreneurs are discussed in sections 2.2 and 2.3. In section 2.4, the concepts of state and trait anxiety are discussed. The research questions and objectives require an understanding of emotions and anxiety in organizations and entrepreneurship, making it necessary to conduct a review of the literature on emotions in organizations (section 2.5) and anxiety in organizations (section 2.6). In addition, it is necessary to review the literature on emotions and entrepreneurship (section 2.7) since the case study in this thesis includes SME entrepreneurs and an entrepreneurial SME organization. This then leads to a discussion on the gap in the literature on anxiety and entrepreneurship (section 2.8) and the aim of this study, which is to contribute to the literature in this area. As the research question and objectives also require an understanding of anxiety at different levels within the SME organization, a review of the literature involving the use of a multi-level approach to emotions/entrepreneurship research (section 2.9) is also conducted. This chapter also reviews paradox theory in organizations (section 2.10) and the paradoxical challenges of SME organizations is discussed in section 2.11. The key themes from the literature are summarized and a conceptual diagram resulting from the literature review is provided in section 2.12. The proposed theoretical framework (section 2.13) is discussed and the chapter ends with a summary and how the research questions are addressed (section 2.14).

A flexible approach was adopted in searching the literature for the relevant academic and other sources for this study. Books and journal articles recommended by other academics such as my supervisors and those known to me were read and noted. Key words and concepts used in the literature were then used to conduct online searches

of appropriate databases and websites from the University library. Titles of books and journal article abstracts were examined to identify their relevance to the topic. Items that were relevant were retrieved, read, notes made and references from those articles were also checked for their relevance and retrieved. I regularly checked electronic resources and websites for interesting, relevant and new publications and articles. The following Table 2.1 illustrates the practical steps taken to review the literature:

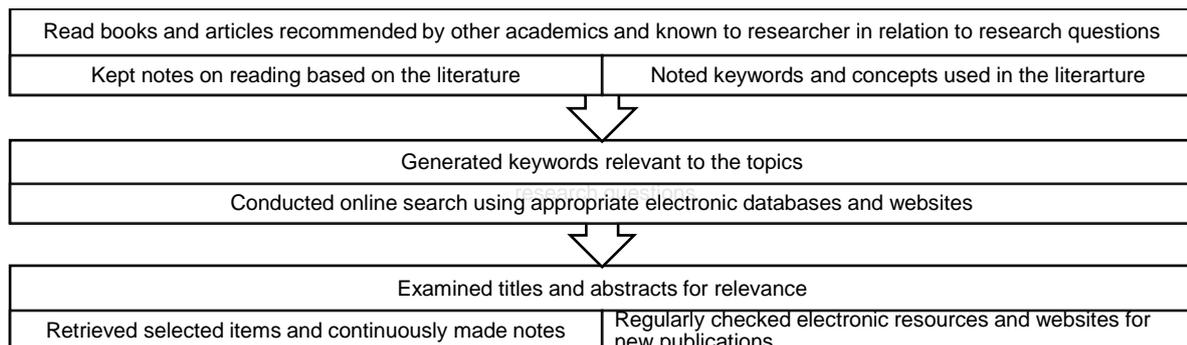


Table 2.1 Literature review process, adapted from Bryman and Bell (2011)

2.2 Defining SMEs and Their Importance

Understanding what the criteria are for the definition of SMEs is necessary for this research. Thus, the definition of SMEs is evaluated and analysed. Some background is also provided on their importance in terms of economic impact.

The definition of SMEs varies quite widely. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) report (2007, p. 8) stated that “there is no universally agreed definition of SMEs. Some analyses define them in terms of their total revenue, while others use the number of employees as an indicator”. For example, the United States Small Business Administration (SBA, 2016) describes companies with fewer than 500 employees as small enterprises. The definition of small and medium-sized enterprises according to the European Commission (2015) is one of the most widely quoted standard definitions in Europe. An illustration is provided in (Table 1.2 in section 1.3 of Chapter 1). The EU criteria for defining SMEs within the European Union are defined according to their size and three additional measures. The first is that an SME employs not more than 250 staff members. The second is that

the maximum annual turnover of an SME is €50 million and third, its balance sheet amounts to less than €43 million. In section 1.3.1 of Chapter 1, a UK definition of SMEs is illustrated in Table 1.1 as organizations that have businesses with 0 to 249 employees, and these are further divided as micro, small and medium sized enterprises. Micro SMEs have less than 10 employees with a turnover of under £2million. Small SMEs have less than 50 employees with a turnover of under £10 million. Medium sized SMEs have less than 250 employees with a turnover of under £50million. Both the EU and UK criteria for defining SMEs are adopted in this study as they are largely similar.

SMEs are a large and important part of the UK's economy; with over 99% of all businesses in the UK classified as small or medium-sized SMEs. In 2017, the total employment in SMEs was 16.1 million, which constitutes 60% of all private sector employment in the UK. The combined annual turnover of SMEs was £1.9 trillion, which is 51% of all private-sector turnover reported in the UK Small Business Statistics (2018). Thus, there is a huge interest and a continued increase in research on SMEs due to the important role they play in the UK economy in providing employment for the population and innovation. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2010, p. 24), "Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are critical parts of today's innovation process and should take a central place in government strategies to promote innovation". However, the nature and size of SMEs create their own unique challenges that could stifle innovation (Ingram et al., 2014; see section 2.7 below for an elaboration of this point). The characteristics of entrepreneurial SMEs will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 Entrepreneurial SMEs—Their Characteristics

As this study is particularly focused on exploring the anxieties of SME entrepreneurs/business owners, it is useful to first understand the distinguishing characteristics attributed to an SME entrepreneur and SME business owner. To do this, it is necessary to discuss the accepted definition of entrepreneurship and distinguish between the traditional sense of a small business and an entrepreneurial SME. To make a distinction between a small business and an entrepreneurial SME,

the concept of entrepreneurship needs to be understood. Entrepreneurship has a wide meaning (Goss et al., 2011). According to Carland, Carland and Stewart (2015), the entrepreneurial process involves the entrepreneurs' initiation of a new venture. The Schumpeterian definition of entrepreneurship places an emphasis on innovation such as the creation of new products, innovative production methods, new markets and forms of organizations. The Schumpeterian definition indicates that central to the process of entrepreneurship is the entrepreneur (Schumpeter, 1947, 1989).

Indeed, definitions of entrepreneurship are heavily influenced by the Schumpeterian emphasis on innovation and the entrepreneur. For example, Drucker (1985, p. 19) also makes the emphasis on innovation and the entrepreneur, stating "innovation is the specific tool of entrepreneurs, how they exploit change as an opportunity for a different business or service. It is capable of being presented as a discipline, capable of being learned, capable of being practised". This perspective is supported by Carland and Carland (2009, p. 173) who stated that innovation was the "soul of entrepreneurship". Carland, Hoy, Boulton and Carland (1984) also argued that innovation was the critical factor when making a distinction between entrepreneurs and managers/small business owners.

A distinction was made by Carland et al., (1984) regarding the individual characteristics and venture characteristics of a small business and an entrepreneurial business. For example, the small business owner establishes the business for personal goals, often using the small business as a source of primary income and is not engaged in strategic innovative practices. In contrast, the entrepreneur establishes the business for growth and is engaged in innovative strategic and marketing practices. Table 2.2 below illustrates the distinctions made in the literature:

Type of Business	Individual Characteristics	Venture Characteristics
Small Business	The small business owner manages and establishes a business for personal goals, it is the owner's primary source of income, the small business is seen as an extension of the owner's personality, the business is intricately bound by family needs and desires.	A small business venture is independently owned and operated. It does not engage in any new marketing and innovative practices.

Entrepreneurship	The entrepreneur starts and establishes a business for the principal purpose of profit and growth. The entrepreneur finds new marketing practices and develops innovative strategic practices.	In an entrepreneurial venture, the principal goal is for profit and growth. The venture is characterized by new marketing and innovative strategic practices.
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Table 2.2 Small Business vs Entrepreneurship—Adapted from Carland et al. (1984)

Many have studied the characteristics associated with entrepreneurship in order to find out about the differences between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs (Carland & Carland 2009; Carland et al., 1984; Gartner, 1989). The traits, values and attitudes are often cited as the most influential factors related to entrepreneurs (Gurol & Atsan, 2006; Man, Lau & Snape, 2008; Simpson, Tuck & Bellamy, 2004). For example, Gurol and Astan (2006) used the following six traits—need for achievement, locus of control, risk-taking propensity, tolerance for ambiguity, innovativeness and self-confidence—to help define the entrepreneurial profile of students in their study. Man et al., (2008) studied SME entrepreneurs and the importance of their entrepreneurial characteristics in relation to their long-term performance. Simpson et al., (2004) also studied how the individual business owner’s characteristics and perspectives were critical factors in the success of small businesses. This is supported also by Markman and Baron (2003), who reiterated that the closer the match between the individual’s personal characteristics and entrepreneurial characteristics, the more successful the individual will be.

The importance of the entrepreneur in the entrepreneurial process has been debated. Gartner (1988) argued that asking the question “Who is an entrepreneur?” was indeed the wrong question. Gartner (1988) criticized Carland et al., (1984) for focusing too much on the traits of entrepreneurs when distinguishing between an entrepreneur and small business owner, arguing that in defining entrepreneurship, the focus should not be on the traits and characteristics of the entrepreneur, but rather, it should be on the creation of an organization by the entrepreneur. On the contrary, it was argued by Carland, Hoy and Carland (1988) that it was indeed a question worth asking because *a dance would not be understood without the dancer*. Carland et al., (1996) also argued that it was necessary to have insights into the psyche of the entrepreneur in order to gain an understanding of the entrepreneurial process. Indeed, a common

distinguishing trait used often to describe entrepreneurs is that they are risk takers (Bessant & Tidd, 2017; Carland et al., 1988; Gurol & Atsan, 2006; Man et al., 2008; Simpson et al., 2004), but that does not necessarily distinguish an entrepreneur from a business owner who may take risks such as donating personal assets as capital to set up a small business or take other business risks to start a small business.

In this study, the distinctions made by Carland et al., (1984) have been applied in distinguishing an SME entrepreneur from a small business owner as indicated in Table 2.2 above. The SME entrepreneurs and business owners interviewed for the purposes of this study were chosen because they were all either experienced entrepreneurs and/or business owners within a variety of small to medium-sized business environments. A breakdown of the types of SMEs in the study are provided in Table 3.7, section 3.10.2 of Chapter 3. All the entrepreneurs interviewed fit both definitions by Carland et al., (1984) of the small business owner and entrepreneur because they were focused on growth and profitability, and nearly all had set up business ventures of various sizes and stages of growth. However, whilst some were involved in developing new marketing practices and innovation, some did perceive their businesses as a lifestyle, personally motivated and/or a family business. It is also important to note that some of the entrepreneurs interviewed did not actually own the business and had been appointed by the original business owners to grow the business, make it innovative and/or profitable. Schumpeter (1989) did allude to the fact that entrepreneurs are not necessarily the owners. Thus, you can have entrepreneurs employed to work in a business organization. The UK SME in this study was specifically chosen for the in-depth longitudinal case study because it had owners and managers who were clearly entrepreneurs, and the business is a fast-growing SME venture that has won numerous national awards for disruptive innovation over the years. Carland et al., (2015) points out that the size of the organization does not necessarily determine whether it is an entrepreneurial business. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that even if an organization is deemed to be an SME, it can still be considered as an entrepreneurial organization; if it is innovative, focused on profit and growth using the Schumpeterian (1989) definition of entrepreneurship.

2.4 The Concepts of State-Trait Anxiety

In Chapter 1 of this study, the definition of emotions and anxiety were provided (see section 1.3.4). State anxiety is defined as fear, nervousness and discomfort induced by different situations arousing the autonomic nervous system, whereas trait anxiety is more of a personal characteristic where feelings of fear, stress, worry and discomfort are experienced daily and connected to anxiety proneness (Spielberger & Reihseiser, 2009). In the context of this study, the definition of state anxiety is loosely used as the criteria for providing a definition of anxiety in the questionnaires (see Appendix D). The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) is a measure of trait and state anxiety (Spielberger & Gorsuch 1983). According to the American Psychological Association (2017), the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory is a test/questionnaire given to adults to show how strong their feelings of anxiety are. The most popular version is known as *Form Y* which has twenty items for assessing trait anxiety and twenty items for assessing state anxiety. State anxiety items include: "I am tense; I am worried" and "I feel calm; I feel secure". Trait anxiety items include: "I worry too much over something that really doesn't matter"; "I am content; I am a steady person". All items are rated on a 4-point scale, for example from "Almost Never" to "Almost Always" with higher scores on the STAI indicating greater anxiety (retrieved from apa.org, STAI, paragraph 2). This study focuses on exploring anxiety similar to the concept of state anxiety in an entrepreneurial SME context through in-depth qualitative research. As the aim is to seek the interpretations of anxiety provided by the participants, the STAI, Form Y which is often used as a clinical tool, was deemed inappropriate for use in this study. However, the existence of an inventory such as the STAI could be adapted for use in a psychometric test to assess levels of entrepreneurs' anxiety. This point is elaborated on in section 7.9 of Chapter 7 of this study as a further recommendation.

This study is a qualitative research that attempts to find out the definitions of anxiety provided by the actors in the context of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial SME organization. Through participants' own words, a definition of anxiety is ascertained and compared with the definition of state anxiety to see where there are similarities and differences as discussed in section 6.4 of Chapter 6. This is aimed at informing practice and contributing to knowledge. Although, there is a gap in the literature on the

emotion of anxiety in the SME context, various studies have been conducted on emotions in organizations, and this will be explored in the next section.

2.5 Emotions in Organizations

It is necessary to broadly understand the concept of emotions in organizations before focusing on the emotion of anxiety. Hartel, Ashkanasy and Zerbe (2014, p. 9) stated that the word “affect” subsumes the words “emotions” and “mood”. They defined emotions as “specific feelings that have a particular focus and a relatively short duration” and mood as “feelings that are more diffused in focus and intensity and are typically of longer duration than emotions”. They discussed the positive and negative effects of emotions and moods, referring to them as “positive affect and negative affect”. Indeed, the literature does suggest that “affect” is a term often used when referring to and discussing emotions in the organizational and entrepreneurial contexts, for example, in Baron (2008); Foo (2009); Baron and Tang (2011); Cardon, Foo, Shepherd and Wiklund (2012); and Hayton and Cholakova (2012). Thus, relevant studies that uses the terms “affect” and/or emotions are included in this literature review and referred to as emotions in general.

2.5.1 Emotions—the social and organizational aspects

Historically, research on emotion in organizations focused on biological and psychological “determinism”, but there is now a shift to the “social and relational context of emotion” (Fineman, 2000, p.3). The social aspects of emotions in organizations have been given specific attention (Fineman, 2000, 2003, 2008; Ashkanasy, 2003) due to the increase in research on group and relational dynamics (French & Vince, 1999). Nica and Molner (2014, p. 117) stated: “Emotions in organizations have consequences that advance beyond those associated with certain persons”, indicating that emotions in organizations are socially influenced. For example, Menges and Kilduff (2015, p. 8) show how group emotions can be created through social interactions in small and large organizational contexts. Using the general understanding of the word “group” (people who are connected by a shared activity, interest, event), they defined group emotions as “those feelings that emerge

from, or in, groups". It has also been indicated that a group can share an emotion through emotion contagion in organizations (Barsade, 2002).

Emotions in the context of work and organization is now considered as a discipline which must be studied (Ashkanasy, 2003). For example, Voronov and Vince (2012) discussed the importance of including an analysis of emotional and unconscious processes in the study of institutional work. Fineman (2000, 2003) discusses the importance of understanding emotions in organizations and at work. Several special issues in the academic literature have been written on the impact of affect and emotional experiences at work/in the workplace (Brief & Weiss, 2002; Briner, 1999; Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000); motivation and emotion (Weiss, 2002); emotions and performance (Ashkanasy, 2004); emotions and leadership (Humphrey, 2002); emotions and conflict (Jordan and Troth, 2006); emotions and managing (Botheridge & Lee, 2008); emotions in negotiation (Druckman & Olekanis, 2007); and entrepreneurial emotion (Cardon et al., 2012; see section 2.7). Toegel, Kilduff and Annand (2013) analysed emotions within organizations and how managers help with managing negative emotions. Menges, Kilduff, Kern and Bruch (2015) show how emotions in organizations were suppressed due to charismatic leadership, and Zerbe, Hartel, Ashkanasy and Petitta's (2017) edition on emotions research looked at the role of emotion and identity.

Voronov and Vince (2010) focused on emotions in the organizational context, using a conceptual framework which was developed to analyse the interconnection between emotion and systems of domination in institutions. They stressed the importance of the emotion of fantasy in explaining how the acceptance of and attachment to institutional arrangements is both cognitive and emotional. Nica and Molner (2014) in their research focused on emotional manifestation within organizational contexts, the role of emotional experiences in the conduct in organizations and the influence of emotions on decision-making. Hartel, Ashkanasy and Zerbe (2014) suggested that emotion is a deeply embedded component of the organizational fabric, apparent at all levels of organizing; at the individual level, it is expressed in interpersonal exchanges and in groups and across the organization.

2.5.2 Types of emotions in organizations

Other examples of studies that focus on specific types of emotions in organizations include Douglas Creed et al. (2014), who saw shame as a discrete emotion that plays a role in the institutional processes; Clancy, Vince and Yiannis (2010), who discussed the notion of disappointment in organizations. Kangasharju and Nikko (2009) assessed humour/ laughter/emotions in organizations; Welpe et al. (2011) discussed the impacts of the emotions of fear, joy and anger. Recent research on emotions and decision making has focused on specific emotions; for example, Gear, Shi, Davies and Fets (2017) discussed how mood affected strategic decision making.

2.5.3 Positive and negative emotions

There are also studies on the positive and negative effects of emotions in organizations (Andries, 2011; Lindebaum & Jordan, 2012, 2014; Oldham, 2010). Andries (2011) describes these negative emotions as unpleasant, for example, sadness, fear, anger, jealousy, etc. Positive emotions are described as pleasant and include joy, happiness and enthusiasm. Oldham (2010 p. 71) discussed about a longitudinal study which found that positive emotions tend to be about “the future and others”, whereas, negative emotions tend to be “about the self”. Lindebaum and Jordan (2014) challenged the asymmetrical assumptions of positive and negative emotions and debated “when it can be good to feel bad and bad to feel good”. The literature shows how negative emotions can have a positive impact and vice versa (Lindebaum & Jordan, 2012). The positive and negative impacts of anxiety, which is often perceived as a negative emotion (Vince, 2010), is also considered in this study.

In summary, the literature shows that emotion is now accepted as a subject which must be studied, with new ways of studying emotions in organizations being discussed and suggested (Zerbe, Hartel & Ashkanasy, 2015). One suggestion is the use of a multi-level research approach (Shephard, 2010; Zerbe, Hartel & Ashkanasy, 2015). The literature on the emotion of anxiety in the organizational

context will now be discussed and analysed due to the relevance to the research questions and objectives of this study.

2.6 Anxiety in Organizations and Social Defence

Anxiety is generally defined as a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome and is an inevitable aspect of organizational behaviour (James & Clark, 2002). Organizations and the individuals/groups within organizations often find ways to deal with anxieties associated with the organization, for example, during stressful times of organizational change (Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2002; French & Vince, 1999). However, due to the similarities between fear and anxiety, many of the studies on the emotion of fear in entrepreneurial organizations tend to use the terms "anxiety" and "fear" interchangeably (Cacciotti & Hayton, 2015), and fear is often deemed to be a barrier and linked to entrepreneurial failure (Arenius & Minniti, 2005; Hessels et al., 2011; Wenneberg et al., 2013). However, it has been shown in section 1.3.4 of Chapter 1 of this study that fear is different from anxiety, but anxiety can lead to the emotional state of fear. That may be the reason why anxiety and fear are sometimes used interchangeably (Cacciotti & Hayton, 2015). The focus of this thesis is on exploring the nature of anxiety in organizations, particularly SMEs. To do this, an historical and broader exploration of the research on anxiety in organizations is necessary. Historically, research on anxiety in the organizational context has focused heavily on social defences against anxiety (Jaques, 1955; Menzies Lyth, 1960), and there has been an increase in the literature in particular edited textbooks on social defence theory (Armstrong & Rustin, 2015; French & Vince, 1999; Hinshewood & Skogstad, 2000; Miller, Gould, Stapley & Stein, 2006). The next section focuses on the influence of psychoanalysis and psychodynamic theory on social defences against anxiety.

2.6.1 Influence of psychodynamic theory

It is necessary to first gain a brief insight on psychodynamic theory due to its strong influence on social defence theory (French & Vince, 1999). Freud (1894) initially provided the underlying psychodynamic theory that was the basis for the concept of

social defence mechanisms against anxiety. Freud (1915) psychologically described how the ego (I-reality aspect of the personality) uses defence mechanisms to protect itself from anxiety created by the competing tensions and demands between the id (instinct and pleasure-seeking aspect of the personality) and the superego (rules of parents and society—external aspect of the personality). This theory about the tensions between the ego, id and superego was also extended to group life by Freud (1921), who stated that there is a collective group unconscious. Klein (1946) built on Freud's theory of the ego, id and superego through her study of infants and developed the "paranoid-schizoid positions" which are explained as anxieties, defences, internal and external object relations used by infants from birth and carried on to adulthood. Klein (1946, 1959) stated that infants experience anxiety in the early stages of life and thus cope unconsciously through splitting and projection identification defence mechanisms. This is done by splitting both self and object into *good and bad/loving and hating* feelings, which are influenced by the life and death instincts. Thus, the maternal object (breast) is divided into a "bad" and a "good" breast. In other words, the mother who is felt by the infant to be persecutory and hated is "bad breast" and the mother who is felt by the infant as gratifying and loving is "good breast". Both the "good" and the "bad" objects are projected and introjected, and a cycle of reprojected and re-introjection follows. According to Klein (1946, 1959), the primitive anxiety and the coping/defence mechanisms in infants are inevitable conscious and unconscious experiences. Jaques (1955) and Menzies Lyth (1960) were influenced by Klein's object relations theory, particularly the ideas about anxiety and the defence mechanisms in the "paranoid-schizoid positions".

2.6.2 Anxiety and social defences

Jaques (1955) put forward the hypothesis of a "social system" against anxiety following his case study of relationships between managers and subordinates in an organizational setting during a period of change. In his study, Jaques found in the group relations evidence of splitting, projective identifications and deflections as "mechanisms of association in social groups to avoid psychotic anxiety" (Jaques, 1955, p. 497). Thus, his hypothesis shows how social defences provided an

institutional binding/protective function and were used as a coping strategy to consciously and unconsciously resist change (Long, 2006).

Another early study that was influenced by Klein and identified the functioning of defences against anxiety was Menzies Lyth's (1960) research into nursing services in a general hospital. She made the proposition that work in health care and social care organizations entail significant anxieties for staff and that defences against these anxieties are part of organizational life. The culture was to distance the nurses physically, psychologically and emotionally from the patients as a social defence mechanism and thus protect the nurses from experiencing anxiety. Menzies Lyth illustrated that these defensive techniques were played out in the nursing service/tasks/work as follows:

1. Splitting up the nurse-patient relationship;
2. Depersonalisation, categorisation, and denial of the significance of the individual;
3. Detachment and denial of feelings;
4. The attempt to eliminate decisions by ritual task-performance;
5. Reducing the weight of responsibility in decision-making by checks
6. Collusive social redistribution of responsibility and irresponsibility;
7. Purposeful obscurity in the formal distribution of responsibility;
8. The reduction of the impact of responsibility by delegation to superiors;
9. Idealisation and underestimation of personal development possibilities; and
10. Avoidance of change.

Krantz (2010) provided a summary of Menzies-Lyth's study stating "coupled with infantilizing management practices, the system promoted dependency, ritualistic work, impersonal relationships with patients, and other characteristics that had the effect of shielding nurses from the painful anxieties stimulated by close and intimate contact with patients and their families" (Krantz, 2010, p. 193). Menzies Lyth found that the social defence system used in the hospital had a negative effect. Both Jaques' (1955) and Menzies Lyth's (1960) studies show how social defence is used as a mechanism

for organizations to protect against anxiety and the tensions at work at the individual and group/collective levels.

However, Jaques (1955) and Menzies Lyth (1960) did initially have some differences in their analysis of social defences against anxiety in the organizational context (Armstrong & Rustin, 2015). Jaques (1955) initially argued that defences against anxiety are brought into the organizations by its members, arising from their own psychopathologies, whereas Menzies Lyth (1960) believed that defences were not brought in by the individuals but were created within the organization due to the nature of the work. In the context of nursing, new nurses have to adapt to the social defences which already exist. Therefore, the new nurses on entry match their own psychic defences to the system that they have joined. Both perspectives are still relevant in helping to understand the role of anxiety at personal, group and organizational levels. Bion (1963) argued that the relationship between the internal and external are reciprocal since the individual influences the organization, and the organization influences the individual. Jaques (1995, 1998) did make the conclusion that psychotic anxieties were in fact caused by badly organized social systems in organizations. In that sense, the focus was being moved from the individual to the organization. However, Long (2006) criticized Jaques (1995) for not looking at defensive systems beyond interpersonal or group dynamics.

Bion (1961) also applied psychoanalysis and the idea of defence mechanisms in his study of group dynamics. Like Freud (1921), Bion (1961) believed that there is a collective group unconscious. He provided a theory that every group is composed of two groups called the “work group” and the “basic assumption group”, with both functioning simultaneously. The former was described as the aspect of the group that is concerned with achieving the functional/real work tasks and has many features which are in common with the ego, whereas, the latter is described as the unconscious and irrational aspect of the group. He subdivided the basic assumption group into three types, namely the dependency group, the fight-or-flight group and the pairing group. In the basic assumption dependency group, the focus is on the leader of the group providing for the group whilst the group members act like children, as if they know nothing compared to the leader. In the basic assumption fight-or-flight group, the group

believes it must preserve itself and survive. Hence, individuals who are seen as preventing the group from achieving its task may be sacrificed through fighting or abandonment (flight). The leader is expected to lead the group to fight or must retreat. And finally, in the basic assumption pairing, the group looks for a “new messiah” as in the Christian Messiah by setting up a pair of members who must find a solution, a brilliant idea or a new hope to eliminate challenges for the group. Like the Christian Messiah, the leader can be “crucified”. The three basic assumptions in Bion’s theory show how a group of people unconsciously collude to protect themselves against tension and anxiety. French and Vince (1999, p. 26) indicated that Bion’s work was the “normative model for group relations practitioners”. Tuckman’s (1965) work on the developmental sequence of small groups and team dynamics further reveals the way groups deal with change and develop over time.

Jaques (1955) provided a working hypothesis; Menzies Lyth (1960) and others such as French and Vince (1999) consequently show how social defences against anxiety can be considered as a theory (Long, 2006). For example, Krantz and Gilmore (1990) argue that social defences against anxiety in organizations are caused by wider social factors/wider trends in society. Hindelwood and Skogstad (2000) provided ways of observing organizational dynamics such as culture and the use of social defences as a mechanism of collective defence. Kets de Vries (2004) also discussed the concept of social defences, which was described as a system of relationships (reflected in the organizational or social structure) constructed to help people deal with persecutory and depressive anxiety. Kets de Vries (1996) provided a description of the characteristics of neurotic organizations in his study. He stated that there are five “ideal” types of such organizations, namely the “dramatic/cyclothymic”, “suspicious”, “compulsive, detached” and “depressive” organizations. Krantz (2010) also addressed the concept of social defences after reviewing the origin and development of the concept, discussing some of the challenges encountered in using the concept and highlighting some features of emerging 21st-century organizations that are well suited for social defence analysis. In this context, anxiety is seen more as a negative emotion leading to using social defences as a coping mechanism within organizations.

The impact of social defence systems and anxiety in group relations was extensively discussed by French and Vince (1999), who stated that management and change are always affected by anxiety in organizations. Boxer (2015, as cited in Armstrong & Rustin, 2015) and Papadopoulos (2015, as cited in Armstrong & Rustin, 2015) both saw the organization and institutional processes as the cause of defences against anxiety. The literature shows that social defences against anxiety are (largely) unconscious, emotional dynamics that become attached to structures, practices, policies and authority relations, and these social defences are used for collectively managing anxiety (Krantz, 2010; Long, 2006). In organizations, there is often a need to develop the ability to quickly embed decisions or to rapidly make changes. However, the prospect of change can be accompanied by frightening emotional experiences coming to the surface (Cacciotti & Hayton, 2015). This, in turn, stimulates resistance to change and offers insights into why attempts at change may fail despite how sensible they might seem at the time (Krantz, 2010; Long, 2006).

2.6.3 Positive and negative effects of anxiety

Social defences against anxiety are used as a mechanism by individuals and groups in a way that can directly impact on the organization to which the individual and group belongs. Therefore, as indicated in the study by Menzies Lyth (1960), an individual may avoid tasks such as meetings, refuse to take responsibility for making decisions and groups may avoid change. In the literature, anxiety is often seen as a negative emotion leading to the use of social defences as a coping mechanism within organizations, with both positive and negative consequences (Hirschhorn & Horowitz, 2015, as cited in Armstrong & Ruskin, 2015). But anxiety can also be seen as a positive emotion, and as Rosen (2008) suggests, anxiety can motivate and discourage. So, “just enough anxiety” in leaders and organizations is a requirement for a successful organization. Hirschhorn and Horowitz (2015, as cited in Armstrong & Ruskin, 2015) also looked at anxiety from a positive perspective. They argue in support of the perspectives of Emery and Trist (1965), who stated that the Western economic world was entering into a stage of turmoil with new risks. Therefore, the revival of entrepreneurship in the economy requires risk-taking activities that can include positive anxieties. They argued that risk can create excitement, especially in

the context of extreme sports and extreme work such as hedge-fund trading. However, in the literature review on anxiety in organizations, there is still limited research on the positive and negative effects of anxiety on entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in the entrepreneurial SME context. This is the gap which this study addresses. However, the broader literature on entrepreneurship and emotions generally is emergent (Cardon, Zietsma, Saparito, Matherne & Davis, 2005) and will now be discussed due to its relevance to the research questions and objectives.

2.7 Entrepreneurship and Emotions

Entrepreneurship is generally defined as a process of innovation of products, services and new markets and as a process which allows for exploitation of new business opportunities (Bessant & Tidd, 2015). Cardon et al. (2012 p. 3) conducted a review of key research papers on emotion and entrepreneurship in order to identify a working definition of entrepreneurial emotion. They concluded that entrepreneurial emotion refers to “the affect, emotions, moods, and/or feelings—of individuals or a collective—that are antecedent to, concurrent with, and/or a consequence of, the entrepreneurial process, meaning the recognition/creation, evaluation, reformulation, and/or the exploitation of a possible opportunity”. Goss (2008) found that unlike most other areas of social science, emotion was a neglected concept within entrepreneurship research. Where it appeared, it was usually marginalized or seen as a subordinate concern to the more rational aspects of information processing and decision making. Doern and Goss (2013) therefore used ideas from social exchange, interaction ritual and discourse theory to propose a model that integrates the processes of social interaction, emotion and cognition. The model supported a set of conjectural propositions about the role of emotions in shaping entrepreneurial behaviour. Baron (2008) found in his research that the feelings and moods individuals experience (i.e., their affect) influence many aspects of cognition and behaviour. Extending these findings to entrepreneurship, he suggested that affect influences several aspects of entrepreneurs’ cognition, and hence it forms an important element of the entrepreneurial process.

In their series of studies focused on the emotion of passion and its impact on entrepreneurship, Cardon, Wincent, Singh and Drnovsek (2009) conducted a systematic review of the literature on passion and entrepreneurship and identified theoretical gaps and ambiguities. To address the ambiguities and gaps, the study developed a conceptual model of emotions and emotional processes within entrepreneurship, placing passion as a key aspect of entrepreneurial emotions. Consequently, various studies focused on the emotion of passion in the study of entrepreneurship and emotions (Cardon & Stevens, 2009; Cardon, Gregoire, Stevens & Patel, 2013). Focusing again on the emotion of passion, Chen et al., (2009) investigated the extent to which venture capitalists' perceptions of "entrepreneurial passion" influenced venture capitalist investment decisions. They defined entrepreneurial passion as an entrepreneur's intense affective state accompanied by cognitive and behavioural manifestations of high personal value. Cardon, Sudek and Mitteness, (2009) followed the same theme when they examined the relationship between the passion an entrepreneur displays, the passion angel investors perceive, and the impact on angel investors' interest in and funding of ventures. The results of their qualitative study indicated that angels do use displayed passion as a factor in their investment decisions and specifically focused on the enthusiasm, preparedness, and the commitment entrepreneurs demonstrate. Foo (2009) also found that entrepreneurs' negative affect directly predicts entrepreneurs' effort towards tasks that are required immediately. The study employed a sampling methodology in which forty-six entrepreneurs used cell phones to provide reports on their affect, future temporal focus, and venture effort twice daily for twenty-four days.

Most of the literature on entrepreneurship and emotion focuses on the individual entrepreneur's emotions and tend to neglect the interpersonal, group or social aspects. Delgado García, De Quevedo Puente and Blanco Mazagatos, (2015) also conducted a systematic review of the literature on affect and entrepreneurship and found that most of the research on affect and entrepreneurship pays little attention to affect beyond individual analysis. Goss (2005) advocated making social situations rather than individuals the analytical starting point for fresh and potentially valuable insights into the nature of entrepreneurial behaviour within organizations. Indeed, the literature is showing a shift towards such a focus. For example, Biniari (2012 p. 1)

argues for the “emotional embeddedness of the entrepreneurial act as a moderator of its social embeddedness”. Using the context of corporate entrepreneurship and the emotion of envy, Biniari (2012) shows how emotions influenced by interactions between entrepreneurs and others in a social context actually impacts on the entrepreneurial process and outcomes. Thus, this thesis also makes a proposal for the study of entrepreneurial anxiety to include an element of the social–emotional interaction between the entrepreneur and others who are influenced by the entrepreneurial process.

Drawing on theories of emotional contagion and goal setting, Breugst, Domurath, Patzelt and Klaukien (2011) expand on this point by proposing how employees' perceptions of entrepreneurial passion influence their commitment to entrepreneurial ventures. This was done using data from a survey of one hundred and twenty-four employees, and the study found that employees' perceptions of their supervisors' passion for inventing, founding and developing impacted their commitment. Breugst et al., (2011) therefore, gives some insights on the impact of the leader's, supervisor's and entrepreneurs' emotions on the employees.

Doern and Goss (2013) offer an evaluation of approaches to entrepreneurial barriers and point to the neglect of social and emotional processes. Using qualitative interviews with twenty-five entrepreneurs in Russia, they suggested that power rituals between entrepreneurs and state officials may impair entrepreneurial motivation. The study looked at emotions and entrepreneurship from a social rather than from an individual perspective. Doern and Goss (2013, p. 865) proposed a model to show how emotions are influenced by social interactions. For example, they stated that in “power rituals”, entrepreneurs engage with third parties to acquire and exchange resources. They indicated that such a process can trigger negative emotions such as shame and anger. They argued that the negative emotion of shame may lead to “appeasement behaviours” whereby individuals express feelings of shame through submissive, appeasing behaviour to minimize conflict, reduce aggression and build trust in social relations. However, Doern and Goss (2012) discussed how the painful experience of submission and appeasing behaviour could have implications for motivation. They contend that this is because an individual's sense of shame can destroy

entrepreneurial motivation and initiative. They believe this can mean the difference between the success and failure of an entrepreneurial business. Through their qualitative research, Doern and Goss (2012; 2013) show how negative and positive emotions can be socially constructed through social interactions and how this affects entrepreneurship.

Goss (2008) proposed a model that integrates the processes of social interaction, emotion and cognition by using ideas from social exchange, interaction ritual and discourse theory. Indeed, there are several research studies that focus on emotion and how it affects entrepreneurial cognition. For example, Baron (2008) shows how aspects of entrepreneurs' cognition form an important element in the entrepreneurship process. It could be argued that in the study of entrepreneurship and emotions, there is a lack of a coherent theoretical base, as Gregoire et al. (2015) discovered in their systematic review of the research on affect, cognition and entrepreneurship. In addition to this assertion, Allen et al., (2017) suggest that there are even more limited and incoherent research on the emotion of anxiety in studies of entrepreneurship and emotions.

This is because most of the literature focuses on the specific emotions of fear, failure, obsession and passion. For example, Fisher, Maritz and Lobo (2013) developed an understanding of obsession in entrepreneurship. They proposed that entrepreneurs may experience venture-related obsessions that are similar to obsession as described in the clinical literature, and they developed a model of entrepreneurial obsession. They suggested that obsession may have a relationship with passion and contribute productively towards desirable entrepreneurial outcomes despite its potential to stimulate negative affect or anxiety. Isenberg (2011) studied entrepreneurship and failure, suggesting that failure should be accepted as part of doing business, punishments for bankruptcy should be removed and failure should be turned into a controlled experience of risk taking. This perspective could be applied to the emotion of anxiety. Perhaps anxiety could also be accepted as a part of doing business. This is similar to Hirschhorn and Horowitz (2015, as cited in Armstrong & Ruskin, 2015) who saw risk taking and anxieties in extreme work as part of the excitement of entrepreneurship.

The theme of entrepreneurship failure is also explored in the literature; Caciotti and Hayton (2015) conducted a systematic literature review of research on fear of failure and entrepreneurship. They indicated that fear and anxiety are often used together in the literature, although it has been shown in Chapter 1 of this study that fear and anxiety are distinct emotions (see section 1.3.4). However, the literature on fear and failure has increased. Shephard (2003) broadly discussed how the self-employed could learn from business failure. Shepherd, Patzelt and Wolfe (2011) discussed the learning gained from consequences of multiple business failures. Using the psychology and emotion literatures, Shepherd, Haynie and Patzelt (2013) showed the human capital costs of corporate entrepreneurship arising from the multiple failures of entrepreneurial projects. Specifically, their study explored how and with what consequences negative emotions can accumulate across multiple failures. The study also focused on the financial benefits and costs of corporate entrepreneurship by investigating the negative impact of multiple project failures on employees. Note however that there is some interest in the literature on the fear of success in entrepreneurship (Ekore & Okekiocha 2012; Tresemer 1977).

Indeed, as interest in emotion and entrepreneurship develops, it will be valuable to know more about the functioning of emotions, both individual entrepreneurs' emotions and interpersonal, group and social aspects embedded in enterprise (Delgado Garcia et al., 2015; Goss, 2005). The literature on entrepreneurship and emotions is growing, with some recent focus on, for example, emotions and leadership in SMEs (Huxtable-Thomas, Hannon & Thomas, 2016), but a gap still exists in the literature on anxiety and entrepreneurship in the context of SMEs.

2.7.1 Emotions and entrepreneurial decision-making

The literature review shows the importance attributed to entrepreneurial decision-making in entrepreneurship and numerous articles have been written to deal with this issue from different perspectives. For example, Mador (2000) focused on strategic decision-making in SMEs. Douglas (2009) discussed entrepreneurial strategic decision-making and the role of cognition. Vermeulen and Curseu, (2010) also

discussed entrepreneurial strategic decision-making indicating the popularity of the topic in the academic entrepreneurship discourse. Aarstad (2014) discussed structural roles and entrepreneurial decision-making; Schade & Burmeister-Lamp, (2007) provided insights and discussed ways in which to look at entrepreneurial decision making. Schmidt & Heidenreich, (2016) assessed the role of human capital, skills and knowledge required in entrepreneurial decision making. Ucbasaran, (2008) discussed the fine science involved in entrepreneurial decision-making. Shepherd, (2010) conducted a review of the benefits of using multi-level entrepreneurial research for the study of entrepreneurial decision-making. Fillis and Rentschler, (2010) discussed the role of creativity and entrepreneurial decision-making. Whist, Maine, Soh and Dos Santos, (2015) discussed the impact of entrepreneurial decision making and opportunity creation.

Michl, Welpel, Sporrle & Picott, (2009) show how emotions and cognition impacts on the entrepreneurial process and the decisions entrepreneurs make. In their study, they provided a model to show how emotions and cognitions impact on the pre-entrepreneurial process. The model explains the importance of emotions and cognition in the steps taken to start up a business. It provides a continuum in which the starting basis is in understanding (1) the perceptions linked to the recognition of entrepreneurial opportunity; (2) the thinking process involved in the evaluation of the entrepreneurial opportunity, (3) how that affects the decisions made to exploit the entrepreneurial opportunity; and (4) the resulting initiatives taken for the entrepreneurial action that leads to the start of the business. This model reveals how emotion and cognition is inherent in entrepreneurial behaviour, especially in the decisions made by entrepreneurs.

Brundin and Gustafsson, (2013) conducted an experiment to investigate SME entrepreneurs' investment decisions and the impact of emotions during periods of uncertainty. They found that the emotions of self-confidence, challenge, hope and low uncertainty increased investment decisions. Whereas, the emotions of embarrassment, strain and high uncertainty decreased investment decisions. On analysis, this study reveals how positive and negative emotional situations impacts on entrepreneurial behaviour and entrepreneurial decision making. Therefore, it would be

interesting to know how the emotion of anxiety impacts on entrepreneurial decision making, but the literature in this area is limited and requires attention. This study also investigates the role of SME entrepreneur's decision and the emotion of anxiety in the research findings and discussions (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6). It is shown how positive and negative anxiety can influence entrepreneur decisions at the personal, social and organizational levels in SMEs. The pilot data collected for this study indicated that SME entrepreneurs' decision making was affected by their feelings of anxiety (see Table 4.2 in Chapter 4). Although, the literature on entrepreneurial decision-making is developing (Maine, Soh & Santos, 2015), there is a gap in the literature on the impact of anxiety on entrepreneurial decision-making.

Shepherd, Williams and Patzelt, (2014) in their review of the literature on entrepreneurial decision-making, acknowledges that entrepreneurial decision-making is a very broad topic. The wider topic of emotions and decision-making in the management context has received more academic attention. For example, Brosch and Sander (2014) discussed the universal core values present in emotions and decision making. Gear et al., (2017) discussed the emotion of mood in strategic decision making. Alvino & Franco, (2017) assessed rationality and emotions in the decision-making process. Zhu, (2013) assessed the role of positive emotions and rationality in decision making by using the Chinese concepts of "Qing" (emotion) and "Li" (rationality). Cavero & Madorran, (2017) assessed emotional intelligence and emotions in decision-making. Jagtap and Gura, (2016 p. 2080) in their article asserted that "decision-makers achieve better performance in decision making if they are able to control the possible biases produced by their feelings". The assumption seems to be here that applying feelings to decision making required controlling to ensure that the decisions are free from bias for effective decision making. Schlösser, Dunning and Fetchenhauer, (2011) discussed the role of emotions in risky decisions, arguing that risky decisions may be provoked by the feelings which are attached to the less risky aspect of the decision rather than the potential results that the decision brings. Thus, showing the importance of emotions in decisions involving risk taking. However, articles in the academic literature that deals specifically on emotions and entrepreneurial decision-making are limited but developing. However, not enough attention has been given in the literature to the emotion of anxiety in entrepreneurship.

2.8 Anxiety and Entrepreneurship—the Gap in the Literature

This study aims to contribute to the knowledge on anxiety and entrepreneurship, as well as to provide insights about the ways in which anxiety is socially embedded within entrepreneurial SMEs. There is currently limited literature on the relationship between anxiety and entrepreneurship. One reason which has already been discussed (see section 1.3.4 in Chapter 1) is that fear and anxiety are terms that have been “used interchangeably to describe the same psychological phenomenon” (Cacciotti & Hayton, 2015: p. 168). Another reason is that social anxiety is often suppressed (Kashdan & Breen, 2008), which has limited researchers’ ability to point towards the distinctive features of anxiety and the impact of this emotion on entrepreneurship.

It is necessary to understand the role of anxiety on the personal and social levels within the entrepreneurial SME organizations and especially how anxiety impacts on entrepreneurial actions. Current literature as indicated shows a limited focus on the study of emotion in the entrepreneurial process and its impact on the organization at different levels. Garcia et al., (2015) recommended a future focus on the investigation of affect’s role across levels of analysis and stages of the entrepreneurial process. Thus, a key focus in this research is to investigate anxiety at the micro, meso and macro levels as indicated in the research question RQ3 and objective RO3 (see section 1.2 of Chapter 1). This study therefore intends to provide insights from which to understand entrepreneurial anxiety from a multi-level perspective in an entrepreneurial SME context. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a broad review of the literature on the use of a multi-level approaches in emotions and entrepreneurship research.

2.9 Literature on Using a Multi-level Approach in Emotions/ Entrepreneurship

Adopting a multi-level approach to research on anxiety means that entrepreneurial emotion within SMEs and the interconnections across levels can be investigated and interpreted. Shepherd (2011) encourages the use of multi-level research on entrepreneurial decision making and other multi-level and cross-level issues in the entrepreneurship domain. Scholars have adopted a multi-level approach in organizational research in topics such as management (Aguinis, Boyd, Pierce & Short, 2011; Klein & Kozlowski, 2000); identity (Ashforth, Rogers & Corley, 2011); happiness

(Ashkanasy (2011); trust (Currall & Inkpen, 2002); managers and teams (Bashshur, Hernández & González-Romá, 2011); team design and stress (Cruz & Pil, 2011); and transformational leadership (Charbonnier-Voirin, El Akremi & Vandenberghe, 2010; Korek, Felfe & Zaepernick-Rothe, 2010). Costa et al. (2013) conducted a systematic review of 132 articles that used a multi-level framework in organizational research over a 10-year period. They found that most of the studies addressed cross-level dynamics between teams and individuals. The interplay between the personal, social and organizational aspects of anxiety in enterprises is central to a better understanding of the connection between individuals' feelings of anxiety as a "social emotion" (Douglas Creed et al, 2014). Welter (2012) conducted an insightful review of the concept of trust and entrepreneurship, showing entrepreneurial behaviour and the contextual impact of trust at the individual, collective and institutional levels.

The literature provides a justification for and supports the approach adopted in this study. Ashkanasy (2003) also provided a multi-level perspective for a deeper understanding of emotion in organizations. For example, a very useful five-level model (Table 2.3 below) analysing positive emotion in organizations provided by Ashkanasy and Ashton-James (2004, as cited in Cooper & Nelson 2007, pp. 57–73) provides insights on the micro, meso and macro levels as applied in this thesis. The following table shows how the authors explained five levels of emotions in organizations ranging from the personal neuropsychological level to the emotional climate at the organizational level as follows:

Level 1. Neuropsychological and cognitive correlates of positive emotion at the within-person level of analysis;
Level 2. Individual differences in positive emotion at the between-persons level of analysis;
Level 3. Communication of positive emotion at the dyadic (relationships) level of analysis;
Level 4. Promulgation of positive emotion at the group level of analysis; and
Level 5. Creation of a positive emotional climate at the organizational level of analysis

Table 2.3 Levels of analysis of positive emotion adapted from Ashkanasy and Ashton-James in Copper & Nelson, (2007).

The term "organization climate" is described as the collective mood/emotions of organizational members toward their jobs, the organization and management

(Ashkanasy, 2003, 2004; Ashkanasy et al., 2000; De Rivera, 1992; Reichers & Schneider, 1990). This is the “level 5” notion described in the table above. The macro/organizational level of study required in this thesis refers to the collective emotion of the organization and adopts this notion of organizational climate as discussed in Chapter 1 (see section 1.3.2). At the meso level, anxiety is investigated and shown as a social emotion that can exist at the team, group or departmental level as indicated by Creed et al., (2014), Delgado Garcia et al., (2015) and Goss (2005). This can be compared to level the 3 (relationships) and level 4 (group) in Table 2.3 of the levels of analysis of positive emotion in organizations. Finally, in this study, the micro-individual/personal level of anxiety is referred to as the personal feelings and experiences of anxiety of the SME entrepreneurs and staff in the entrepreneurial SME. This is similar to the level 1 (within-person) analysis and level 2 (between persons) analysis in the 5-level model above (Table 2.3). The literature on multi-level perspectives in emotions and entrepreneurship research provides a justification and supports the approach adopted in this study. By using a multi-level approach, this study investigates the positive and negative aspects of anxiety and entrepreneurship in the SME context from the personal (micro) social/group (meso) and organizational (macro) levels in order to provide a deeper understanding.

2.10 Literature on Organizational Paradox Theory

Anxiety is a double-edged emotion for organizational actors (Vince & Martin, 1993). For example, anxiety can both undermine the desire to act in support of change and at the same time provide the impetus needed to push towards change (Vince & Martin, 1993). It is important to study the tensions inherent in people’s experiences of anxiety in SMEs because such experiences can help to reveal underlying emotional and political dynamics that have implications for the ability of enterprises to be innovative, learn, grow and change. In addition, such tensions offer important information for improving the understanding of anxiety as a social and entrepreneurial emotion. Using paradox theory, makes it possible to understand the tensions, contradictions and complexities in organizations (Smith, Lewis, Jarzabkowski & Langley, 2017).

2.10.1 Using a paradoxical perspective

Lewis and Smith (2014 p.127) suggest that organizations are “rife with tensions”, and researchers have often used contingency theory to respond. According to Morgan (1986), contingency theory is based on the premise that management decisions and actions are aligned with the organization’s internal and external circumstances. One example is the matching/alignment of the organizational structure and strategy (Chandler, 1962). Lewis and Smith (2014) suggest that paradox theory in contrast is concerned with the contradictory tensions.

A paradox has been defined as “persistent contradictions between interdependent elements” (Schad et al., 2016, p. 4). A paradox is also described as "contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time" (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 382). This definition is analogous to the assertion that anxiety is a persistent, double-edged emotion, one that can lead individuals and organizations towards both ignorance and insight. Therefore, paradox theory can provide a meta-theoretical perspective (Lewis & Smith, 2014; Schad et al., 2016) from which to study anxiety and entrepreneurship.

The recent literature on organizational paradox (Putnam, Fairhurst & Banghart, 2016; Schad, et al., 2016) show how multiple demands in organizations are both contradictory, as well as interdependent tensions that are embedded and persistent over time. Smith and Lewis (2016) in their review of the paradox literature found that studies have shown how paradoxical tensions exists at different levels in an organization. They gave examples of studies such as Smith and Tushman, (2005) who found that organizational efforts to explore and exploit would create tensions experienced by individual leaders and their senior teams. Huy (2002) found this tension with middle managers; Gibson and Birkinshawn (2004) found it with individual employees; and Long (2006, p. 284) indicates that social defences against anxiety provide insights into the “paradox of change” as illustrated by Smith and Berg (1987) in their study on the paradoxes of group life.

A paradoxical lens has been applied by researchers to gain an understanding of the contradictions and tensions in a wide range of topics including family firms (Ingram et al., 2014); organizational ambidexterity (Papachroni, Heracleous & Paroutis, 2014);

change management (Berlinger, Sitkin, Quinn & Cameron, 1990; Sutherland & Smith, 2011); organizational change and social defence (Long, 2006; Vince & Broussine, 1996); dialectics of change (Williams 2008); hybrid organizing (Jay, 2013); leadership (Waldman & Bowen, 2016; Zhang, Waldman, Han & Li, 2015); senior leadership efforts (Adner & Helfat, 2003; Smith & Tushman, 2005); goal setting (Miron-spektor & Beenen, 2012); teams (Ashforth & Reingen, 2014; Murnighan & Conlon, 1991); identity (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001; Kreiner, Hollensbe, Sheep, Smith & Kataria, 2015); creativity of teams (Miron-spektor, Erez & Naveh, 2011); diversity (Lindsay, 1990); human resource management (Aust, Brandl & Keegan, 2015); tensions between performance and learning (Bunderson and Sutcliffe, 2003; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Van Der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005); social responsibility and sustainability (Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse & Figge, 2014); innovation (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Smith, Erez, Jarvenpaa, Lewis & Tracey 2017); and social entrepreneurs (Smith, Besharov, Wessels & Chertok, 2012; Tian & Smith, 2014).

Miron-skepter et al., (2018) used quantitative and qualitative methods in their study to find out how individuals deal differently with tensions within organizations, and their results show that a “paradox mindset” is the key to unlocking the potential of everyday tensions such as resource scarcity (i.e., limited time and funding). They demonstrated that a paradox mindset, which simply means the extent to which the individual is accepting of and energized by tensions, can help individuals to improve in job performance and innovation.

In the context of entrepreneurship, Tian and Smith (2014) applied paradox theory to entrepreneurial leadership in social enterprises, highlighting the paradoxes which exist for social entrepreneurs. On the one hand, social entrepreneurs seek to improve the world through profitable businesses but also strive to fulfil a social mission that is associated with non-profit-seeking goals, missions and stakeholders. Tian and Smith (2014) show how these paradoxes and distinct challenges faced by social entrepreneurs can be embraced. In the same vein, Smith et al., (2012) also proposed a paradoxical leadership model for social entrepreneurs dealing with the competing and contradictory demands of profit and social mission. They proposed the use of two settings for educating social entrepreneurs—one in the classroom and one in the

field—to illustrate pedagogical tools for teaching skills necessary for dealing with the paradoxical challenges.

Paradox theory invites scholars to consider *both/and* rather than *either/or* perspectives on contradictory organizational phenomena (Cameron & Quinn, 1988; Lewis, 2000). The theory allows scholars to look at organizational problems critically. Thus, rather than seeking a clear "either/or" decision using formal logic to weigh the pros and cons of each side, paradoxical tensions enable scholars to look at both sides using paradoxical thinking. Poole and van da Ven (1989, p. 562) in their heavily influential work on paradox theory discussed the opportunities offered by tensions, oppositions and contradictions among explanations of the same phenomenon. Showing how such tensions can be regarded as “paradoxes of social theory”, they provided four ways of working with paradoxes, namely “(1) accept the paradox and use it constructively; (2) clarify levels of analysis; (3) temporally separate the two levels; and (4) introduce new terms to resolve the paradox”.

Smith and Lewis (2011, p. 389) present a “dynamic equilibrium model” which provides a means of dealing with paradox in organizations. Their model shows how cyclical responses to paradoxical tension “enables sustainability-peak performance in the present that enables success in the future”. They propose that paradoxes offer incredible potential, powering innovation and high performance when leaders think paradoxically.

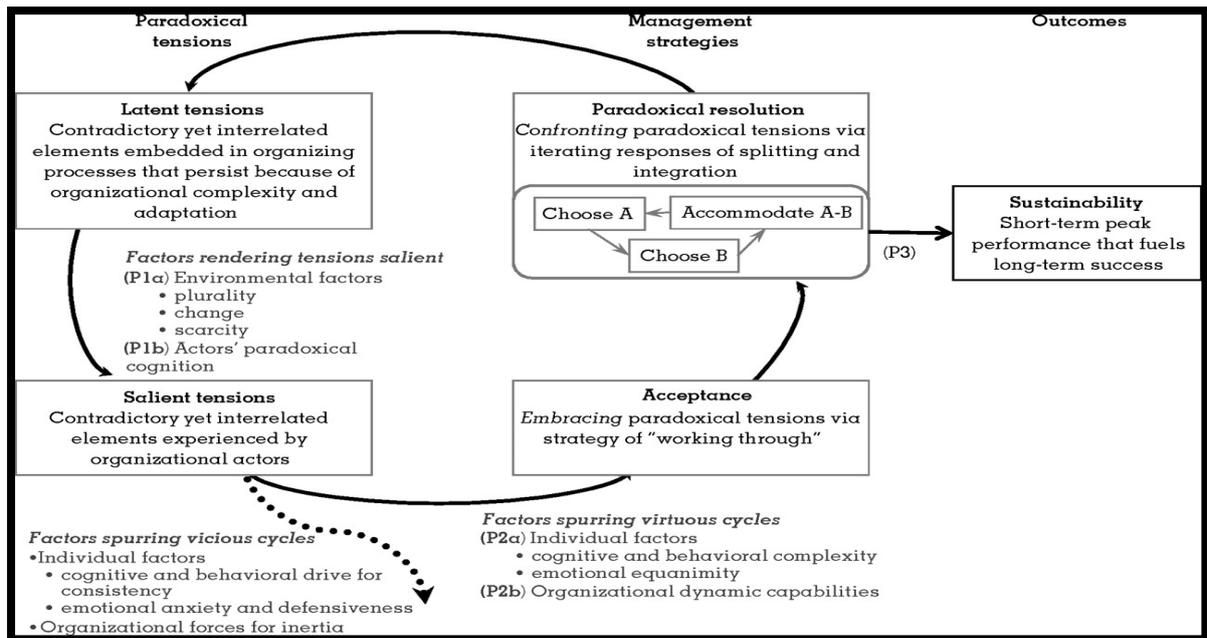


Figure 2.1 Smith and Lewis' (2011) "dynamic equilibrium" model

Smith and Lewis (2011) in their dynamic equilibrium model portray a positive reinforcing cycle. They show that by accepting paradoxes and embedding paradoxical tensions into strategies, learning and creativity are encouraged. Paradoxes allow for Janusian thinking as depicted by Rothenberg (1979) who, in his study of creative geniuses, found that breakthrough ideas were achieved as a result of juxtaposing contradictions. Using a paradoxical perspective does have restrictions because it is not relevant to use a paradox for non-paradoxical tensions such as conflicts that require making a compromise or dilemmas that require either/or decisions. This is because paradox theory requires a holistic, dynamic, both/and approach (Lewis & Smith, 2014; Smith & Lewis, 2011). However, the experience of paradoxical tensions results in the use of social defence mechanisms (French & Vince, 1999; Long, 2006).

2.10.2 Paradox and social defence at all levels

Using family firms as an illustration, Ingram et al. (2014 p. 18) found that three tensions are highlighted in the family business literature: "tradition and change, control and autonomy, liquidity and growth". It can be argued that SME entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial SMES can relate to the latter two tensions of "control and autonomy" and "liquidity and growth" as illustrated by Ingram et al., (2014). The authors also

stated that the more family firm leaders perceive these tensions, the greater their potential negative impact. Asserting that if only one side of a tension is stressed (e.g., tradition, control, liquidity), demands for the other side (e.g., change, autonomy, growth) will intensify. These paradoxical challenges can be attributed to SMEs in general due to their nature, as illustrated in section 2.11 below. Long (2006) also agreed that there is a paradox inherent in organizational change situations. Social defence is used to help organizations and its members to work in the anxiety-provoking situations of change, with loss of social defence leading to overwhelming anxieties. However, on the contrary, “problems arise when the defence system itself works against engaging the task” (Long, 2006, p. 284).

Lewis and Smith (2014, p. 132–133) indicated that in applying a paradoxical lens, two assumptions are made. Firstly, it is assumed that tensions are innate in organizations “arising from the interplay among complex, dynamic and ambiguous systems”. These dynamic ambiguous systems include “human beings, teams, organizations”. Secondly, paradox is assumed to be constructed cognitively and socially from the “actors’ responses to tensions” when the negative tensions are avoided, reduced, masked or polarised by avoiding or reducing the negative effect of the tensions. It is stipulated that a paradox perspective requires an examination of the actors’ responses, defences and strategies regarding the paradoxical tensions.

Lewis (2000) identified six defences against paradox which included i) splitting, which involves reinforcing the distinctiveness of the tensions; ii) projecting, which involves attributing it to another; iii) repressing, which involves repressing/ignoring the tensions; iv) regressing, which involves going back to the prior state when the tensions did not exist; v) reaction formation, which means to reinforce the feeling opposing the tensions; and vi) ambivalence by creating a distance with the tensions.

In summary, the literature on paradox theory shows that paradox can be used as a lens to understand anxiety and social defences against anxiety in organizations. Paradox theory accepts that there are inherent tensions and anxieties in organizations at individual, team and collective levels. It accepts that responses to paradoxes include the use of social defence mechanisms and that paradoxical tensions such as those caused by anxiety can be resolved by thinking paradoxically, developing a paradox

mindset, using learning tools to deal with the tensions and adopting a more holistic and dynamic approach (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

2.11 Nature of SMEs is a Paradox

Since paradox is inherent in organizations, it would make sense that SMEs by their nature would have inherent paradoxical tensions. In their paper on “the condition of smallness”, Anderson and Ullah (2014, p. 340) identified a circular dynamic that underpins small firms’ openness and resistance to growth. They stated, “Whilst the characteristics of small firms benefit survival, paradoxically they also inhibit growth”. Therefore, flexibility, choice and notions of independence characterize the survival of small firms; but these same characteristics also combine in ways that represent “a reluctance to grow from a comfort zone of control and sustainability” (p. 341). The desire for a comfort zone of control and sustainability at least in part is due to the ongoing anxieties that result from internal and external tensions, continuous resourcing issues, and an ever-present sense of urgency in the business and financial worries and uncertainties. Therefore, the multiple competing goals, tensions and anxieties inherent in and experienced by SMEs can be seen through a paradoxical lens.

Since there is a gap in the literature that specifically deals with the emotion of anxiety in the entrepreneurial SME context, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the literature by exploring the experiences of entrepreneurial anxiety and the social defences against the anxieties and paradoxical tensions/contradictions. Research into the positive and negative effects of anxiety on entrepreneurs and on SMEs has practical potential if it can help to identify critical issues that can affect survival, growth, learning (Vince, 2018; Zgrzywa-Ziemak, 2015; Zhang, 2006) and change. For example, Vince and Broussine (1996) employed an innovative qualitative method of participatory research that used drawings to access organizational members’ emotional responses, bring out paradoxical emotions and use them in a process to deal with the uncertainties and defensiveness associated with change. Therefore, using a paradoxical lens will make it possible to understand the complexities, tensions and contradictions linked to anxieties in the SME context.

2.12 Summary of Themes from the Literature Review

Below is a summary Table 2.4 which shows the key topics and themes emerging from the literature with some of the academic sources as discussed in this Chapter.

Topic	Key themes from the literature	Relevant academic sources
Emotions in organizations	Emotions are referred to as affect, they are socially constructed, forms part of the institutional processes, are collective in nature. Emotions have a multi-level dimension.	<i>French & Vince, (1999); Barsade, (2002); Ashkanasy, (2003); Fineman, (2000, 2003, 2008); Baron (2008); Foo (2009); Voronov and Vince (2010); Baron and Tang (2011); Cardon, Foo, Shepherd and Wiklund (2012); Hayton and Cholakova (2012); Hartel, Ashkanasy and Zerbe (2014); Nica and Molner (2014); Menges, Kilduff, Kern and Bruch (2015), Hartel, Ashkanasy and Petitta's (2017) Vince(2018)</i>
Anxiety in organizations	Anxiety at the individual, team and organization levels. Anxiety in organizations are influenced by social defence theory.	<i>Jaques, (1955); Menzies Lyth, (1960); Bion (1961); Crane (1980); French & Vince, (1999); Hinshewood & Skogstad, 2000; James & Clark, 2002; Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2002; Kets de Vries (2004); Arenius & Minniti, 2005;</i>

		<i>Long, (2006). Miller, Gould, Stapley & Stein, (2006); Rosen (2008); Krantz, (2010); Hessels et al., 2011; Wenneberg et al., 2013); Armstrong & Rustin, (2015); Allen et al., (2017)</i>
Entrepreneurship and emotions	Affect, cognition, and entrepreneurship often focus on the entrepreneur. Emotions are socially embedded in entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial decision making	<i>Cardon, et al., (2005); Goss, (2005, 2008); Baron (2008); Cardon, Wincent, Singh and Drnovsek, (2009); Chen et al. (2009); Shepherd, Patzelt and Wolfe (2011); Breugst, Domurath, Patzelt and Klaukien (2011); Isenberg (2011); Biniari (2012); Cardon et al. (201) 2Doern and Goss (2012; 2013); Shepherd, Haynie and Patzelt (2013); Fisher, Maritz and Lobo (2013); Delgado Garcia et al., (2015); Gregoire et al. (2015); Armstrong & Ruskin, (2015); Huxtable-Thomas, Hannon & Thomas, (2016);); Allen et al., (2017)</i>
Anxiety and entrepreneurship	Anxiety in the entrepreneurial context is interchanged with fear, failure, often seen as negative emotion but can also be seen as a positive emotion.	<i>Rosen (2008); Douglas Creed et al., (2014); Cacciotti & Hayton, (2015); Allen Vince and Gear (2017)</i>

	Literature is limited on anxiety and entrepreneurship.	
SMEs and their nature	Nature of the SMEs-paradoxical, SMEs show a “condition of smallness” and small family firms have paradoxical tensions. Literature is limited on anxiety and entrepreneurship in SMEs. SME’s can be entrepreneurial	<i>Anderson and Ullah (2014); Ingram et al., (2014); Allen et al., (2017)</i> <i>Carland et al., (1984); Gartner, 1989. Man Lau & Snape (2008) Carland & Carland (2009)</i>
Paradox in organizations/ positive and negative emotions	Paradoxical tensions and contradictions in organizations are interconnected and can be sustained.	<i>Cameron & Quinn, (1988); Poole and van da Ven (1989);Vince & Martin, (1993); Lewis (2000); Gibson & Birkinshawn (2004) ; Smith and Tushman, (2005) ; and Long (2006); Rosen (2008); Oldham, 2010); Andries, (2011); Smith and Lewis (2011);Lindebaum & Jordan, (2012, 2014); Lewis and Smith (2014); Tian and Smith (2014) ; Ingram et al., 2014; Schad et al., (2016); Smith and Lewis (2016); Smith, Lewis, Jarzabkowski & Langlely, (2017); Miron-skepter et al., (2018)</i>

Table 2.4 Themes from the literature and academic sources

The themes from the literature show how emotions are manifested at the personal, team and organizational levels. It shows that there is a move away from a focus on cognition and emotion towards socially constructed emotions and its impact at the multi-level faces of the organization. The literature review includes all types of organizations, not just SMEs. There is evidence as shown in the literature that SMEs can consist of the micro, meso and macro levels and can be entrepreneurial. The literature themes and topics also show the relational and conceptual dynamics of each topic as illustrated in Table 2.5 below:

Topic	Relational and conceptual dynamics
Emotions in organizations	Multi-level dynamics/socially constructed
Anxiety in organizations	Multi-level dynamics/social defence
Entrepreneurship and emotions	Emotion is embedded/relational
Anxiety and entrepreneurship	Social defence, paradoxical tensions and multi-level dynamics
SMEs and their nature	Paradox/multi-level dynamics
Paradox in organizations/ positive and negative emotions	Social defence, paradoxical lens applied to the tensions and contradictions

Table 2.5 Topics from the literature and their relational aspects

The summary diagram (Figure 2.3) below has been developed from the literature and topics discussed in this Chapter. The diagram starts from the basis that SME organizations can have entrepreneurial characteristics. The literature on emotions in organizations show that emotions are socially constructed and forms part of the institutional process. Studies on anxiety in organizations, focuses mainly on the social defences against anxiety. However, there is limited literature on anxiety and entrepreneurship, especially in the SME context. The literature on emotions and entrepreneurship is developed with emphasis on affect, cognition and the entrepreneur. However, the literature shows that emotions are socially embedded in entrepreneurship. The literature also suggest that the nature of SMEs creates

paradoxical tensions. Paradox theory is relevant as it provides insights on how the tensions and contradictions linked to positive and negative emotions are managed at the personal, social and organizational levels. Figure 2.3 below is used to develop an emergent model of paradoxical tensions of anxiety at different relational levels in an entrepreneurial SME with examples of the key academic sources already listed in Table 2.4 above for each topic:

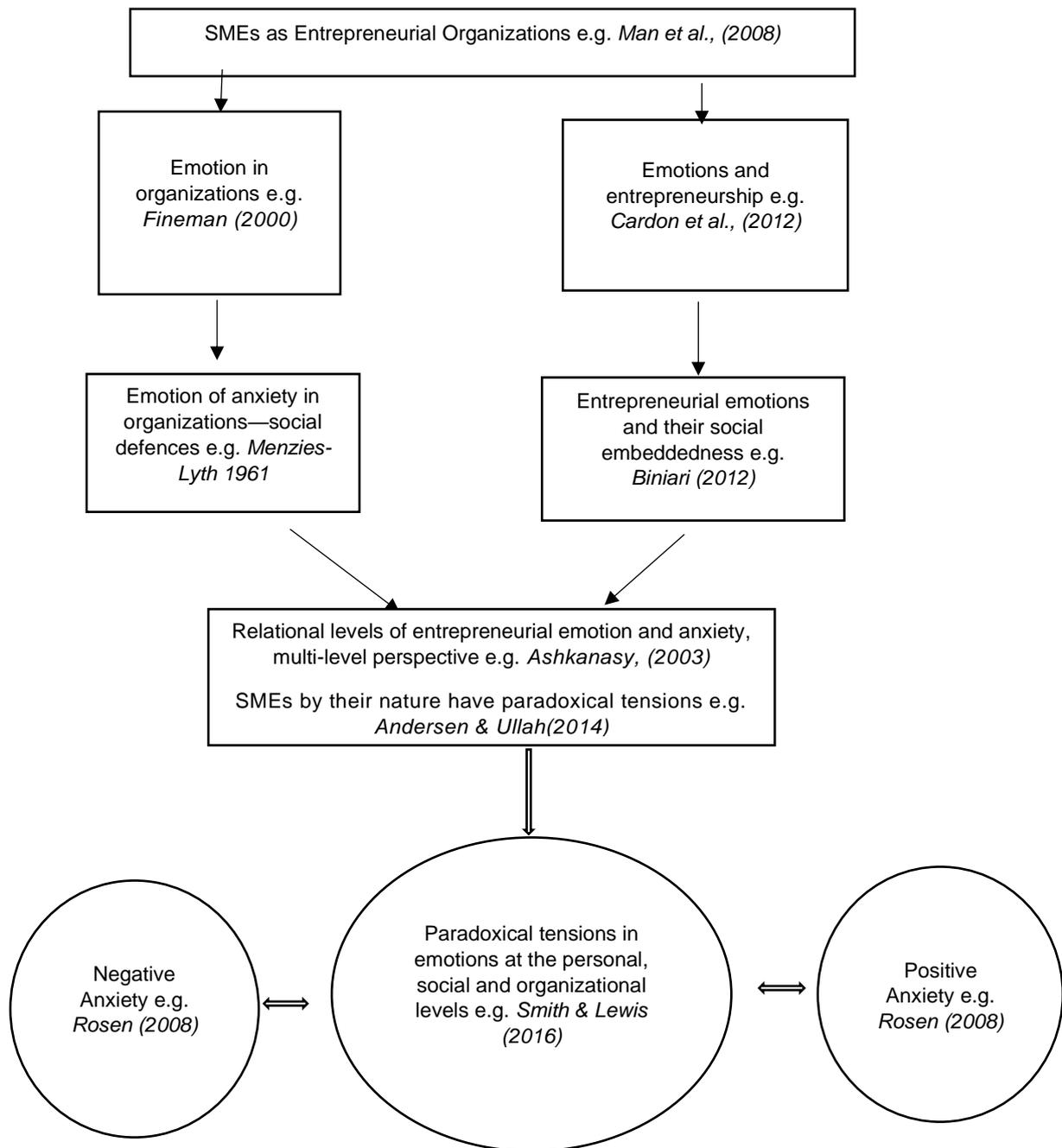


Figure 2.3: A diagram which provides a synthesis of the literature on emotions and anxiety in organizations and entrepreneurship

2.13 Towards a Paradoxical Conceptual Theoretical Framework

The literature suggests that innovative and entrepreneurial behaviour is linked to both positive *and* negative emotions (Goss, 2008), and this includes the emotion of anxiety (Rosen, 2008). Studies have also shown that paradox is essential for organizational creativity and innovation (Fong, 2006). For example, Norman, Palich, Livingstone and Carinin (2004) contended that an organization must use paradoxical logic to successfully innovate. This is particularly relevant for entrepreneurial SMEs and innovative organizations. There is also a need to emphasize processual approaches to studying contradictions and paradoxes (Langley & Sloan, 2011; Putnam et al., 2016), especially through a longitudinal study such as the one adopted in this study. Scholars who use a paradoxical lens characterize competing demands as residing in dynamic, persistent tensions, but critically, the majority of studies have treated paradoxical phenomena as static and fixed (Schad et al., 2016). According to Shephard and Suddaby (2016, p. 3), “Recognizing the underlying tension between two sets of relationships that appear to make sense when considered independently but contradictory when considered simultaneously can trigger theorizing as an attempt to resolve the paradox”. Thus, paradox can be used as the basis for theory building where there is potential evidence of contradictory tensions in the narrative.

Using paradox as an overarching theoretical perspective helps to identify how anxiety informs contradictions and sustains the interplay between underlying forces of entrepreneurial behaviour and action. The framework proposed in Chapter 7 shows how anxieties manifest at the different organizational levels, namely micro (entrepreneur/personal/individual level), meso (interpersonal, team) and macro (organizational, collective) and their interconnectedness. For the organization, the SME entrepreneur has to operate between a high-risk strategy with a potentially high reward and a low risk strategy with less potential for reward. At the social level, there is the tension between openness and sharing of risks, especially financial, and not sharing to perhaps reduce the anxieties of others. At the personal level, the SME entrepreneur has the internal tension of reconciling excitement at what is possible with the risk of failure. This is elaborated further in Chapter 7.

2.14 Summary of the Chapter and Addressing the Research Questions

In summary, the focus of this chapter has been on how emotions are perceived in organizations, with a special focus on the emotion of anxiety in organizations. The key themes that were identified from the literature review covered various points ranging from emotions in organizations, emotions and entrepreneurship, the positive and negative experiences of emotions for entrepreneurs and organizations. The themes from the literature show how emotions are manifested at the personal, team and organizational levels. This chapter is beginning to answer first research question of this study which is *what is meant by the emotion of “anxiety”?*

This chapter also addresses part of the first research objective of this study which is to *understand the underlying emotions of anxiety in organizations, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial SMEs*. The literature showed how social defence mechanisms have been used as a defence against anxiety in organizations, groups and individuals within organizations, leading to the development of social defence theory. The second research question and objectives also necessitate an investigation of the literature on emotions and entrepreneurship. Although, the literature in this area is expanding, the emotion of anxiety in entrepreneurship is shown to be largely ignored, a gap which this thesis now addresses. The third research question focuses on anxiety at the personal, team/group and organizational levels, the literature on multi-level research in emotions and entrepreneurship was also explored. Since anxiety is embedded in organizations and shown to be a social emotion with social defences that have positive and negative consequences, an insight is required on the paradoxical tensions in organizations. Hence, a review of paradoxical tensions in organizations was conducted and linked to the proposed conceptual framework for this study. The following Table 2.6 illustrates how the key themes from the literature begins to address the research questions of this study as discussed in this section:

Research Question	Themes from the literature that address the research questions
RQ1. What is meant by the emotion of “anxiety” ...?	<p>Emotions are referred to as affect, they are socially constructed, forms part of the institutional processes, are collective in nature.</p> <p>Affect, cognition, and entrepreneurship often focus on the entrepreneur.</p> <p>State and trait anxiety.</p>
RQ2. How are the feelings and experiences of “anxiety” interpreted by entrepreneurial SMEs...?	<p>Anxiety for the individual, team and organization. Anxiety in organizations are influenced by social defence theory.</p> <p>Anxiety in the entrepreneurial context is interchanged with fear, failure, often seen as negative emotion but can also be seen as a positive emotion. Literature is limited on anxiety and entrepreneurship.</p> <p>Emotions are socially embedded in entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial decision making.</p>
RQ3. How is “anxiety” manifested at the different relational levels—namely micro (entrepreneur, personal, individual), meso (interpersonal, team, group) and macro (organizational)...?	<p>Emotions in organizations have a multi-level dimension.</p> <p>Nature of the SMEs- paradoxical, SMEs show a “condition of smallness” and small family firms have paradoxical tensions.</p>

	<p>Literature is limited on anxiety and entrepreneurship in SMEs.</p> <p>Paradoxical tensions and contradictions in organizations are interconnected and can be sustained. Social defences.</p>
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Table 2.6 How the research questions were addressed in Chapter 2

In Chapter 3, the focus is on the methodological process used in the thesis to answer the research questions and meet the research objectives with a particular focus on SMEs as required in this study.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research philosophy and the methodological approach adopted in this study are discussed. The theoretical approach to this research will first be considered in section 3.2, followed by an illustration of the research design in a map (section 3.3). The ontological and epistemological bases for this research are then explained and justified, with an explanation of the paradigms (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, 2017; Kuhn, 1970) often followed in quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman 2004; Gray, 2014) in sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6, respectively. In this study, the ontological position of constructionism/subjectivism is utilised (see section 3.4) and the epistemological positions of interpretivist, constructivist and social constructionism are deemed appropriate (see sections 3.4 and 3.5) with a justification provided for the paradigms in section 3.6. In section 3.7, the use of a qualitative strategy and research design are discussed. A case study and multi-level approach are utilized to find out how the participants define anxiety as entrepreneurs, how participants describe their experiences of anxiety and how anxiety is manifested at individual, team and organizational levels in entrepreneurial SME organizations. Issues of credibility, reliability, validity and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nobel & Smith, 2015) are discussed in-depth in section 3.8. The research methods and a discussion of how the sources were triangulated (Denzin, 1978, 2012; Patton, 1999) are covered in section 3.9. Section 3.10 covers how the research data is collected and in section 3.11, how the data was analysed using a qualitative content analysis approach (Cavanagh, 1997; Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; King, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) as opposed to a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998; Charmaz, 2000, 2006, 2014). Qualitative content analysis allows the researcher to systematically analyse qualitative data such as interviews through the process of open coding, creating categories and thematic analysis of participant responses. The research limitations are discussed in section 3.12 and are followed by the research ethics (section 3.13). Finally, section 3.14 provides a summary of the chapter and how the research objectives are addressed.

3.2 Inductive and Deductive Theoretical Considerations

In empirical research, choosing an inductive or deductive approach to research data will have an opposing impact on the way theory is developed. Inductive theory is developed from the outcome of the observations and findings of the research. On the other hand, deductive theory is obtained through the testing of a pre-existing hypothesis or theoretical assumptions (Gray, 2014; Miller & Brewer, 2003). Through the process of induction, the researcher will develop theory after an in-depth analysis of the research data and findings. In the case of deduction, the observations and findings are used by the researcher to either confirm, reject or revise the hypothesis (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, 2016). Saunders et al., (2006, 2016) provides a useful illustration on the differences in emphasis between deductive and inductive research as shown in Table 3.1 below:

Deduction emphasises	Induction emphasises
scientific principles	gaining an understanding of meanings that humans attach to events
moving from theory to data	a close understanding of the research context
the need to explain causal relationships between variables	the collection of qualitative data
the collection of quantitative data	a more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses
the application of control to ensure validity of data	a realisation that the researcher is part of the research process
the operationalisation of concepts to ensure clarity of definition	less concern with the need to generalise
a highly structured approach	
researcher independence of what is being researched	
the necessity to collect samples of sufficient size in order to generalise conclusions	

Table 3. 1 Deduction and Induction differences adapted from Saunders et al., 2009

In this research, an inductive approach is followed due to the research aims, questions and objectives (Gray, 2014) and the exploratory nature of the research. Bryman (2006) illustrates (see Table 3.2) how a quantitative research strategy tends to be theoretically

deductive, epistemologically positivist and ontologically objective. In contrast, a qualitative strategy is theoretically inductive and influenced by an interpretivist, epistemological philosophy and a subjectivist (also referred to as constructionist) ontological perspective. A quantitative strategy focuses on quantity in the collection and analysis of data to test theory, whereas a qualitative strategy focuses on collecting and analysing qualitative data to generate theory (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Gray, 2014). Qualitative and quantitative research strategies can be combined and adopted as a mixed method research strategy, and this is becoming increasingly popular (Lund, 2012; Ostlund, Kidd, Wengstrom & Rowa-Dewar, 2011). However, in this research, a qualitative strategy is the only adopted strategy because it reflects the desire to understand the meanings and interpretations given by the social actors (Lune & Berg, 2017) and their “lived” experiences (Cope, 2005; Patton, 1990). This is because the research adopts an interpretivist and subjectivist viewpoint as opposed to a positivist and objectivist paradigm. The following table illustrates the differences:

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Principal orientation to the role of theory in relation to research	Deductive/test theory	Inductive/generate theory
Epistemological orientation	Natural science, positivist	Interpretivism
Ontological orientation	Objectivism	Constructionism/subjectivism

Table 3.2 Differences between quantitative and qualitative research adapted from Bryman (2006, 2008)

As this study adopts a qualitative approach, qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews and focus groups with the SME entrepreneurs and the SME case study (Gerring, 2006) are all used. In obtaining rich descriptions and interpretations of the experiences of the participants, an inductive process is used to provide an emergent conceptualisation of theory. An illustrative map is created to provide an overall picture of the research design in the following section.

3.3 Illustrative Map for the Research Design

The reasons for choosing the subjectivist and interpretivist paradigm (discussed in section 3.4) and a constructivist and social constructionist paradigm (section 3.5) in this research is influenced by the research aim, questions and objectives, the need to understand the feelings, meanings, experiences and interpretations of the participants emotions of anxiety individually and in their social context.

The following diagram (3.1) provides a visual illustration of the research design and shows the framework used to decide on the research paradigm.

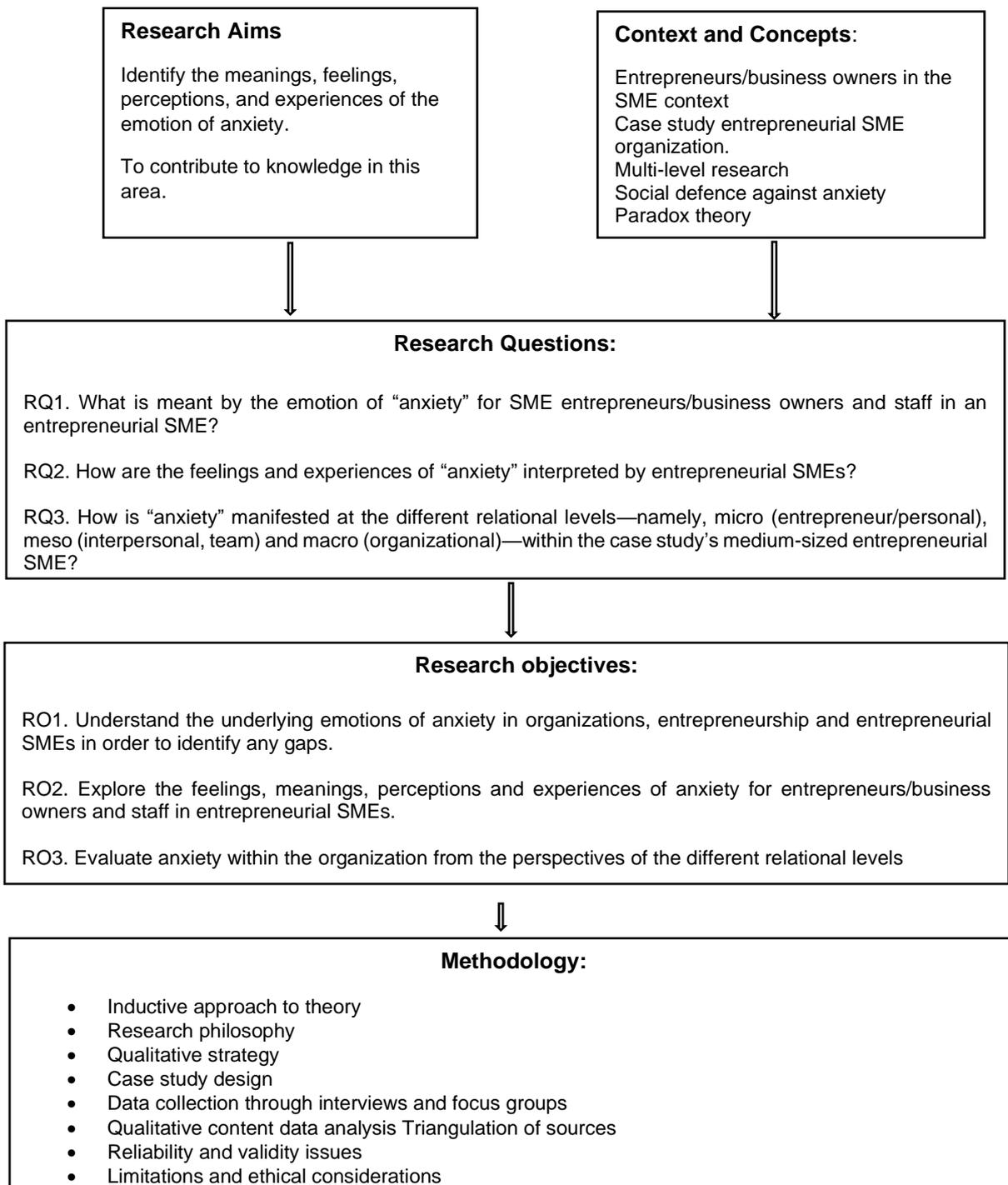


Figure 3.1 Illustrative map of the research design

3.4 Research Philosophy and Paradigms

The paradigmatic considerations of the epistemology and ontological positions of this study must be analysed to justify the philosophical underpinning (Burrell & Morgan, 2017). Cope (2005) indicates that the selection of a research methodology is influenced by the decisions made at an ontological level which inform the researcher's epistemological viewpoint. This approach of first ascertaining the ontological position in order to identify the epistemological philosophy is long established (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, 2017; Guba, 1990; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). We will now consider the meaning of ontology and epistemology.

Ontology is a Greek word which means "to exist" (Dieronitou, 2014). Ontology therefore refers to one's view of the existence of the real world or what "reality" is (Guba, 1990). Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 1) state that the ontological question for the social scientists is "whether the 'reality' to be investigated is external to the individual, imposing itself on individual consciousness from without, or the product of individual consciousness; whether 'reality' is of an 'objective' nature, or the product of individual cognition; whether 'reality' is a given 'out there' in the world, or the product of one's mind". In other words, can "reality" be interpreted objectively or is it interpreted subjectively (Burrell & Morgan, 2017)? Objectivism indicates that the social world is a reality which is "independent of social actors", whereas subjectivism, which is also referred to as constructionism, asserts that the social world is a reality that is "continually being constructed by the social actors" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 21–22; Saunders et al., 2009). Table below is a summary of the research philosophies.

Ontology—view of reality or being	Research Philosophy-Epistemology
External, objective and independent of social actors	Positivism
Is objective. Exists independently of human thoughts and beliefs or knowledge of their existence (realist) but is interpreted through social conditioning (critical realist)	Realism

Socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple- Subjectivism	Interpretivism
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Table 3.3 Summary of the ontological perspective and resulting research philosophies.

Epistemology in Greek means “knowledge” and in social science it refers to what is regarded as knowledge (Bryman & Bell 2011, 2015; Saunders et al., 2009). Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 1) explain how the nature of epistemology is concerned with assumptions about knowledge and how we understand the world, stating, “These assumptions entail ideas, for example, about what forms of knowledge can be obtained, and how one can sort out what is to be regarded as 'true' from what is to be regarded as 'false'. Indeed, this dichotomy of 'true' and 'false' itself presupposes a certain epistemological stance”. Epistemology is, therefore, concerned with a particular philosophy, ideology or principles that form the basis of knowledge. Epistemology is accepted as having three broad philosophical positions, namely positivism, realism and interpretivism (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The concept of pragmatism is often included as another paradigm to be considered when discussing epistemology. However, in this study, the three main paradigms of positivism, realism and interpretivism will now be discussed with a focus on interpretivism as it is the paradigm adopted by me.

Positivism as an epistemological philosophical perspective is based on a realist ontology which states that natural laws determine reality (Saunders et al., 2006). The role of science in positivism is to strive for causal relationships, and research must be objective, measurable, predictable and controllable (Pugh as cited in Morgan, 1983). Realism accepts that reality is independent of social actors’ interpretation of reality, and there is an external reality. Guba (1985) places critical realism in between positivism and interpretivism. The criticality of “critical realism” is attributed to the view that the categories social scientists use to identify the structure or processes of social reality are provisional, not always directly observable, can change and transform the status quo (Bhaskar, 1975).

Interpretivism is in contrast to positivism because it requires the social scientist to ascertain the subjective meaning of social reality and action. Burrell and Morgan (1979, 2007) refer to epistemology as being either positivist or anti-positivist.

Interpretivism, therefore, would be considered to be anti-positivist and influences the phenomenological philosophical tradition (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The phenomenological philosophy is seen as “anti-positivist” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) and is seen to have been initially developed by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and consequently developed by Alfred Schutz (1899–1959). Cope (2005, p. 4) explains that in phenomenology, there is no distinction or contrast between an “appearance and reality” and no assumptions are made about reality; instead, the focus is on one’s description of how things are experienced. This view is supported by Burrell and Morgan (1979; 2007) when they reiterated Husserl’s “life view” (Husserl, 2012) that the task of phenomenology is to explore and reveal types and structures of experiences. According to Taylor, Devault and Bogdan (2015), phenomenologists view behaviours as products of how people interpret the world. Thus, this study can also be seen as a phenomenological inquiry because it aims to understand the nature of anxiety from the perspectives of those who experience it by exploring the subjective meanings and their explanations. The methodological focus is on the interpretation of the experiences.

As this study adopts an interpretivist research philosophy, it is accepted that using the interpretivist philosophy means adopting a particular paradigm (Kuhn, 1970), namely a cluster of beliefs influencing a particular discipline. In particular, by choosing an interpretivist position, it is acknowledged that one the four accepted paradigm positions for the study of organizations which, according to Burrell and Morgan (1979; 2007), are functionalist (study of organizations based on problem solving); interpretivist (organizations understood through the experiences of the social actors); radical humanist (organizations as social arrangements that require change); and radical structuralist (organizations as power relationships) has been chosen.

The use of each of the competing paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011) results in a different type of analysis and possibly insights and findings. Thus, the choice of an interpretivist paradigm impacts the research design, strategy and data collection methods. The interpretivist paradigm has been used as an approach by researchers to understand various aspects of a business context. For example, in leadership, understanding the subjective meaning given by the leaders themselves is essential to understanding how they lead (Grint, 2000). The interpretivist

approach adopted in this study also leads to findings which are unexpected and will provide a deeper understanding and contribute to knowledge. Through the process of induction, a conceptual framework will be developed in response to the research questions and responses given by the respondents (Bryman, 2006; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.5 Constructivist and Social Constructionist Paradigms

This study also uses the epistemological perspectives of social constructionist (Berger & Luckman, 1966, 1989; Burr, 1995; Gergen, 2005; Gergen & Gergen, 2010; Kant 1998) and constructivist paradigms (Bruner, 2005; Kelly, 1955; Piaget, 1969; Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivism asserts that meaning /knowledge of reality is a human construct. Young and Colin (2004) identified three main constructivist perspective namely; radical constructivism, moderate constructivism and social constructivism. Radical constructivism contends that the human mind constructs reality; moderate constructivism contends that individual construction of reality is influenced by external relationships and social constructivism contends that individual construction comes from social relationships. Young and Colin (2004) commented that social constructivism is similar to social constructionism, but they are different. Bergman and Luckmann (1966, 1989) view knowledge as created by the interactions of individuals and see society as existing both as a subjective and an objective reality. Hence, reality is socially constructed, and objective reality is thus created through the interaction of people in the social world. Young and Collin (2004) reiterate that social constructionism contends that knowledge is sustained by social processes, and knowledge and social action go together. Bergman and Luckmann (1966, 1989) argue that reality is socially defined by individuals and groups. As an illustration, Thomas and Linstead (2002) in their study of middle managers follow a social constructionist approach by accepting that the term “middle management” is itself based on a social construct. Thus, in their research, they were interested in considering the managers’ own subjective constructs of their identities and feelings about their roles. They also investigated how middle managers made sense of their socially constructed roles, which were subject to change in terms of their work roles and status in their organizations

In general, it is useful to distinguish between constructivism and social constructionism as both terms are often used interchangeably (Bryman & Bell, 2006, 2011; Burr, 1995). Young and Colin (2004) state that constructivism is distinguished by its focus on how the individual cognitively engages in the construction of knowledge, whereas social constructionism claims that knowledge and meaning are historically and culturally constructed through social processes and action. Young and Colin (2004, p. 377) also allude to the view, which is also supported by Gergen (2005), that social constructionism includes a spectrum of views. At one end of the spectrum, social constructionism sees that interpretations are shaped by social issues and at the other end of spectrum, it sees that the social world is constructed by social and relational issues. In this study, it could be argued that both ends of the spectrum apply due to the research questions and objectives. Young and Colin (2004) concede that constructivism and social constructionism share a common heritage. Hence, the reason why both are used interchangeably (Givens, 2008). Andrews (2012), also argued that social constructionism can be traced in part to an interpretivist approach to thinking but yet is distinct from interpretivism. This view is supported by Schwandt (2000) who listed interpretivism, hermeneutics and social constructionism as the three major epistemological stances in qualitative inquiry. The reasons and justification for using the interpretivist, constructivist and social constructionist paradigms will now be discussed in light of the research questions.

3.6 Justification for Adopting Interpretivist, Constructivist and Social Constructionist Paradigms

The interpretivist methodological approach adopted in this research is supported by the literature that has focused on anxiety, emotion and entrepreneurial research in general. For example, Abebrese (2014) focuses on the use of descriptive and interpretative studies in entrepreneurial research. Adopting an interpretivist paradigm allows for the understanding of the participants' own interpretation of their experiences of anxiety. Gartner and Burley (2002) reviewed the use of qualitative methods in entrepreneurship research by various authors and discussed how Dodd (2002), for example, analysed the metaphors of entrepreneurship from the perspective of the entrepreneur. One of the main metaphors used by the entrepreneurs about their businesses was "passion" (Dodd, 2002). In this study, in-depth descriptions and

interpretations of participant's words are often used as vignettes to illustrate their definitions and experiences of anxiety, as shown in Chapters 4 and 5.

A constructivist and social constructionist paradigm are also adopted in this study because it is necessary to understand the socially constructed aspects of anxiety in organizations and entrepreneurship. For example, Doern and Goss (2012) used a qualitative approach of interviews with 25 Russian entrepreneurs to look at the barriers caused by socially related emotions such as shame in entrepreneurship. In this study, the use of a qualitative; interpretivist, constructivist and social constructionist approach makes it possible to ascertain how SME entrepreneurs interpret anxiety, the influences of external factors in their interpretations and their social defences against anxiety in the SME entrepreneurial context. The aim of this study is to find the answers to the research questions which are exploratory and subjective, namely:

The first research question (RQ1) asks: What is meant by the emotion of "anxiety" for SME entrepreneurs/business owners and staff in an entrepreneurial SME?

The second research question (RQ2) asks: How are the feelings and experiences of "anxiety" interpreted by entrepreneurial SMEs?

To answer RQ1 and RQ2, an interpretive and constructivist epistemological approach is necessary because the study explores SME entrepreneurs/business owners and their employees' accounts of anxiety in an entrepreneurial SME organizational context. By using an interpretive approach, the study intends to find out the meanings given by the research participants to their experiences of anxiety (Schwandt, 2000; Vince, 2010). The research questions are designed to seek the meanings, perceptions, descriptions and interpretations of the emotion of anxiety given by the participants. The objectives of the study are to understand the experiences/interpretations of anxiety of the participant entrepreneurs/business owners and staff in an entrepreneurial SME. According to Cope (2005), in recent years, the field of entrepreneurship has witnessed an emerging body of research that operates within an interpretive paradigm. The same interpretivist approach has been applied in this current research on the emotion of anxiety in SME entrepreneurs and an entrepreneurial SME. By gaining an understanding of the meanings given by the participants through semi-structured interviews and focus groups, the study aimed to

understand how the experiences of the emotion of anxiety in the SME context are cognitively and socially constructed by the participants.

The third research question (RQ3) asks: How is “anxiety” manifested at the different relational levels, namely micro (entrepreneur/personal), meso (interpersonal, team) and macro (organizational). With this research question, anxiety is being investigated from a social/relational context and requires an understanding of the subjective meanings given by the social actors individually, as a social group and collectively from an organizational perspective. The objective is to follow Bergman and Luckmann’s (1991) social constructionist epistemological stance that reality is socially defined by individuals and groups. The literature supports this assertion since it has been shown in the literature review chapter (see section 2.6) that anxiety can be socially constructed, and organizations/groups can use social defences as mechanisms against anxiety (French & Vince, 1999; Jaques, 1955; Long 2006; Menzies Lyth, 1960). Anxiety can be constructed relationally and socially in ways that create and sustain organizational unease so that organizational members are perpetually uncomfortable about, for example, the consequences of becoming exposed (Vince, 2010; Vince & Broussine, 1996). Vince and Saleem (2004) and Gabriel (2012) show how pervasive anxieties about being punished for speaking out undermine communication and reflection both within and across the boundaries of teams and departments in an organization. Therefore, in addition to its intra-personal manifestations, anxiety can be understood as a social emotion, one of a range of “emotions that pertain to the state of social relations ... that hold communities together in institutional processes” (Creed et al., 2013, p. 7). Anxiety has paradoxical consequences (Long, 2006) and Luscher, Lewis and Ingram (2006) stated that a social constructionist lens should be applied in the study of organizational paradoxes arguing that paradoxes are socially constructed. Doern and Goss (2012; 2013) used qualitative interviews with entrepreneurs to ascertain the effect of social relations on the emotions of entrepreneurs and the impact on entrepreneurial action. The third research question and objective in this study focuses on the relational and social anxiety within the case study’s organization and the SME entrepreneurs. It assumes a socially constructed reality that requires investigation. To do this, a multi-level case study design approach is utilised and will now be discussed.

3.7 Research Design

In this section, the focus is on the explanation and justification for the use of a case study and multi-level approach in the research design.

3.7.1 Case study design

In social research, a case study requires an in-depth study of a key part of a whole or a single case, which may be an “individual, group, organization or event” (Gerring, 2006, p. 1). Crowe et al. (2011) also refer to a case study as exploring an event or phenomena in its natural context. In this thesis, a case study approach is adopted because the intent is to generate an intensive examination of a case and explore how theory can be generated out of the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Yin (2003) and Stake (2003) support the view that the use of a case study is a valid research approach. Eisenhardt (1989) confirms that theories can be built from case study research and Yin (2003) asserts that thoroughness can be achieved using a range of tools available to the case study researcher.

Yin (2003) proposed five types of case study, although they are not mutually exclusive but could be used in research. The first is identified as a critical case. This is when the research seeks to gain a better understanding of an existing theory, which means that the findings of the case would be critical to the theory that is tested. This is also known as testing existing theory. The second is a unique case. This is when the research seeks to investigate a case that has not previously been researched and used in clinical studies. The third type of case is a revelatory case, which means new findings are sought. The fourth type of case study is a typical/representative case that investigates a common everyday situation or form of organization. The fifth type is a longitudinal case, which means the researcher investigates a case over time. These categories of case study types have been challenged as narrow with a positivist perspective (Lee, Collier & Cullen, 2007). However, the categories are useful for identifying the types of case study used in this research. A combination of case study types is used because this study is exploring specifically the emotion of anxiety in SME entrepreneurs in an entrepreneurial SME organization, over a period of time. Thus, it is a combination of typical, unique and longitudinal case studies.

The following diagram (Figure 3.2) illustrates this:

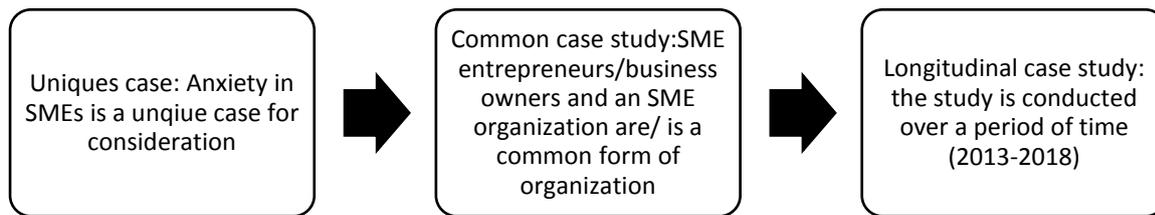


Figure 3.2 Types of case study (Yin, 2003) applied to the thesis

Perren and Ram (2004) show how the qualitative case-study method has a long and respected history and has now gained considerable attention within the small business and entrepreneurial research community. Various researchers have adopted an interpretative, qualitative case study approach to SME entrepreneurial research and research on emotions in organizations. Case study research is increasing in entrepreneurship research (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000) and has been applied across a range of entrepreneurial contexts including, but not limited to, family business (Khavul, Bruton & Wood, 2009); entrepreneurial networking (Jack et al., 2008); entrepreneurial teams (Iacobucci & Rosa, 2010); innovation (Vega et al., 2012); leadership (Kansikas et al., 2012); small business support (Mole & Keogh, 2009); and social enterprise (Haugh, 2005; Vickers & Lyon, 2014). In addition, case study approaches have been used in the study of entrepreneurial emotion and entrepreneurial intention (Aramand & Valliere, 2012; Laaksonen et al., 2011; Youcef, Djelloul & Mokhtar, 2015). However, there has been no previous research on anxiety and entrepreneurship in the SME context, thus making the case study in this research a unique case (Yin, 2003).

In general, Perren & Ram (2004) demonstrate the basis for the use of case studies in entrepreneurship and small business research. They provide a mapping which illustrates the range of paradigms in case study research; differentiating between “objective” and “subjective” perspectives, “milieu” and “entrepreneurial” boundaries and the “organization” and the “entrepreneur” as separate and distinct units of analysis. On this basis, it can be seen that in this study, the SME entrepreneurs form a unit of analysis and the entrepreneurial SME organization forms another unit of analysis. Perren and Ram (2004) stress the fact that case studies may involve several

different actors each with their own unique perspective. They acknowledge that no single paradigmatic approach is ideal; their conceptualisation is intended to “sensitize researchers to the plurality of case study paradigms and therefore provide some form of release from the hegemony of a particular paradigmatic cage” (Perren & Ram, 2004, p. 95). In this case study research, which explores anxiety in SME entrepreneurs and in an entrepreneurial SME, a subjective, interpretivist, constructivist and social constructionist paradigms are adopted as shown in sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 above.

Gerring (2006) also supports the perspective that in research design, there are several possibilities for conducting case study research. One example is to choose a sample of one or more cases from a population and conduct a single or comparative case study. In the context of this study, and based on the research questions, the population is derived from SMEs only. From this population, entrepreneurs and business owners were chosen for a focus group meeting, and in-depth one-to-one interviews were conducted, allowing for a study of a case within a case, which is known as a “comparative method” (Gerring, 2006, p. 28). This was then followed by an in-depth case study of an entrepreneurial SME organization founded by two of the entrepreneurial business owners over a period of time, allowing for a “comparative-historical” study (Gerring, 2006, p. 28).

A study of an organization over a period of time (from months to several years) can be seen as a longitudinal case study (Pettigrew, 1990; Yin, 2003). An example is the longitudinal case study on the emotions of managers and key persons in cross-border mergers and acquisitions (Hassett, Reynolds & Sandberg, 2018) where participants were interviewed in two rounds between 2007 and 2008. A longitudinal case study approach was adopted in this study because participants in the entrepreneurial SME organization were visited on several occasions between 2013 and 2018 to gain further insights on their perceptions and updates on the organization in relation to issues relevant to the research questions and objectives. The choice of a longitudinal study was made to ensure richness and depth of data collection and analysis. Thus, in this study, a multiple idea of cases has been applied and Ragin and Becker (1992) confirm that research can involve multiple definitions and uses of cases.

3.7.2 Multi-level approach

In accordance with the objectives of this research, a multi-level and cross-level dynamic process of data collection has been adopted which is evident in emotions and organizations research, such as Ashkanasy (2003) and Ashkanasy and Ashton-James (2004), who conducted several studies on emotions in organizations from a multi-level perspective, and also in entrepreneurship and emotions research (Creed et al., 2014; Delgado Garcia et al., 2015; Goss, 2005) and organizational behaviour research (Costa et al., 2013).

Research is conducted in three phases using a cross-section of SME entrepreneurs/business owners and at different levels within the case study's entrepreneurial SME organization as indicated in Figure 3.3 below:

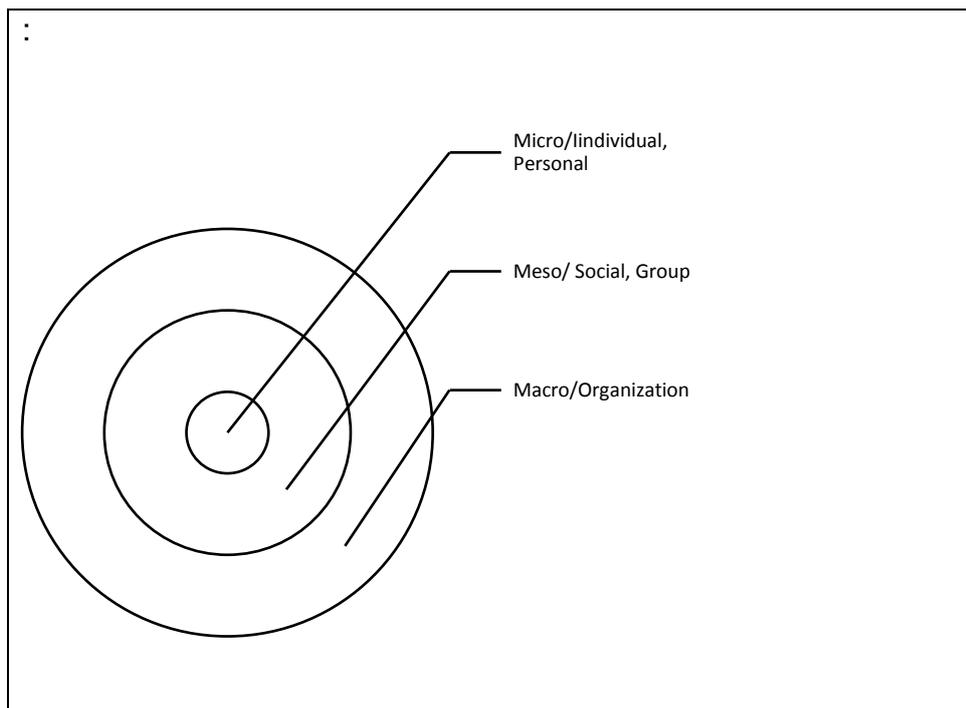


Figure 3.3 Anxiety at the micro, meso and macro levels and its relationship

This has enabled the building of an initial conceptual framework from which to understand the functioning of anxiety at multi-levels—personal (micro), social (meso and organizational (macro) and to ensure credibility.

3.8 Credibility, Generalisability Reliability and Validity Issues

Issues of credibility require attention in qualitative research (Noble & Smith, 2015). However, in quantitative research, reliability (repeatability of the results), validity (integrity of the conclusion) and generalizability (replication of results) are all given importance in relation to research findings. Yin (1984) argued that the qualitative case study approach can meet the reliability and validity requirements and could therefore be analytically generalizable. Piekkari, Welsh and Paavilainen (2008) deem this view as a positivistic approach. On the other hand, Lee, Collier and Cullen (2007) propose that perhaps generalization is not the main focus for case study research. Therefore, they argue whether the notions of reliability, validity and generalizability should be applied in qualitative research. The case study approach in this study relates to Piekkari et al., (2008) idea of the “alternative” case study approach as distinguished from the “positivist” case study approach. The former approach seeks to produce rich data that identifies contradicting interpretations and meanings whilst the latter approach seeks to “generate generalizable propositions”. One example of this alternative approach in case study research is the study by Harris and Wheeler (2005) on entrepreneurs’ interpersonal relationships and their perceptions and beliefs in the process of internationalisation.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also offer an alternative criterion for demonstrating rigour within qualitative research, namely “truth value”, “consistency”, “neutrality” and “applicability”. They suggest that validity, which concerns the precision with which the findings are accurately reflected in the data, should be replaced with “truth value” in qualitative research. The latter recognises that multiple realities exist; the researchers outline personal experiences and viewpoints that may have resulted in methodological bias; and participants’ perspectives are clearly and accurately presented. They suggest that reliability which focuses on the consistency of the analytical procedures, including accounting for personal and research-method biases that may have influenced the findings, should be replaced in qualitative research with the idea of “consistency”. This relates to the “trustworthiness” by which the methods have been undertaken and is dependent on the researcher maintaining a “decision-trail”; i.e., the researcher's decisions are clear and transparent. Ultimately, an independent researcher should be able to arrive at similar or comparable findings in the research.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that confirmability is achieved when the truth value, consistency and applicability have been addressed. This centres on acknowledging the complexity of prolonged engagements with participants and that the methods undertaken, and findings are intrinsically linked to the researcher's philosophical position, experiences and perspectives. These should be accounted for and differentiated from participants' accounts. Finally, the authors suggest that generalisability, which is concerned with the transferability of the findings to other settings, be replaced with "applicability", which is concerned with findings that can be applied to other contexts, settings or groups.

Leitch, Hill and Harrison (2009) also address concerns about interpretivist research regarding validity, reliability, objectivity, generalisability and communicability of results and propose that quality must be adopted within the underlying research philosophy rather than be tested upon completion, thereby requiring a move away from the idea of validity as an outcome to "validation" as a process. To explain this, they provide a guiding framework and present a case illustration that will assist an interpretivist entrepreneurship researcher to establish and demonstrate the quality of their work through respondent validation (Bryman & Bell, 2011), for example. One positive outcome of respondent validation is that it allows for any power imbalance between the researcher and participant to be addressed by giving the participant the right to give feedback on the researcher's interpretation of the data.

Respondent validation was followed in this study because the initial pilot focus group participants were revisited to give their feedback on the focus group transcript before one- to -one interviews were conducted. All participants that took part in the semi-structured interviews were given the opportunity to read the transcripts of their interviews and provide feedback. The conference paper which was written following data analysis was disseminated to participants for their feedback.

In light of the need to ensure trustworthiness, Noble and Smith (2015) provide a very useful list of practical steps that can be taken in qualitative research. They state that unlike quantitative researchers, who apply statistical methods for establishing validity and reliability of research findings, qualitative researchers attempt to design and incorporate methodological strategies to ensure the "trustworthiness" of the findings. The strategies as suggested by Nobel and Smith (2015) have been applied in this

thesis to ensure the trustworthiness of the study during research design, data collection and analysis as evidenced in the following sections and chapters. For example, triangulation has been achieved through the sources of data collected and discussed in the following section 3.9. This is shown in the following Table 3.4 which provides the list of the practical steps as suggested by Nobel and Smith (2015) and the response to the steps taken in relation to this study:

Practical steps/strategies (Nobel & Smith, 2015)	Researcher's response for this study
Accounting for personal biases which may have influenced findings;	This issue is addressed in s3.11, s3.12 and s3.13 below.
Acknowledging biases in sampling and ongoing critical reflection on methods to ensure sufficient depth and relevance of data collection and analysis;	This issue is addressed in s3.11 below.
Meticulous record keeping, demonstrating a clear decision trail and ensuring interpretations of data are consistent and transparent;	This issue is addressed in s3.10, s3.11 and s3.12 below.
Establishing a comparison case/seeking out similarities and differences across accounts to ensure different perspectives are represented;	This is done through the interviews with SME entrepreneurs from different organizations and the participants from the case study's entrepreneurial SME during the three phases of data collection as explained in s3.10 below.
Including rich and thick verbatim descriptions of participants' accounts to support findings;	This is shown in the Chapters 4 and 5 of the findings.
Demonstrating clarity in terms of thought processes during data analysis and subsequent interpretations;	This is shown in s3.11 below and Chapters 4 and 5 in the findings.
Engaging with other researchers to reduce research bias;	Done in discussions with academic groups and conference presentations such as the 2014 <i>On the Organization Conference</i> and 2017 <i>EURAM</i> conference attended by the researcher to present the research for peer review. The EURAM conference paper was co-written with experienced academic professors who confirmed the rigour of the data analysis process.

Respondent validation: includes inviting participants to comment on the interview transcript and whether the final themes and concepts created adequately reflect the phenomena being investigated; and	This was done during visits to the participants to show them interview transcripts and to request feedback on the transcripts.
Data triangulation, whereby different methods and perspectives help produce a more comprehensive set of findings.	Triangulation is addressed in s 3.9 below.

Table 3.4 Practical steps/strategies for data trustworthiness adapted from Nobel and Smith (2015)

3.9 Research Methods, Triangulation and Saturation of Sources

The main research methods in this study are from focus group interviews, one-to-one semi-structured interviews, individually completed questionnaires and informal meetings over a period of time. Interviews and focus groups allow the researcher to ask in-depth questions and probe responses (Collis & Hussey, 2003). The purpose of in-depth interviews is to understand the lived experiences of other people and the meanings they make of those experiences (Cope, 2005; Siedman, 2013). The interviews were semi-structured. The interviewer acted as a guide, providing to the participants areas to focus on whilst giving interviewees the opportunity to talk freely. Qualitative interviews are increasingly being used in this field; for example, Cope (2005) used “phenomenological interviews” of six participant SME entrepreneurs to understand how they learn from the challenges of their businesses.

Denzin (1978, 2012) and Patton (1999) identify four types of triangulation. The first is *methods triangulation* whereby the consistency of findings is generated by different data collection methods, for example, using qualitative and quantitative data in a study to provide evidence of where data converge and diverge to provide more insight on the phenomena. A second type of triangulation is in relation to the *sources* which allow for the examination of the consistency of different data sources within the same method, for example, at different points in time, in public vs. private settings and comparing people with different viewpoints. A third method is *analysis triangulation* which uses multiple analyses to review findings or uses multiple observers and analysis. This method provides a check on selective perception and illuminates blind spots in an interpretive analysis; thus, the goal is not to seek consensus but to understand multiple ways of seeing the data. The fourth method is *theory/perspective*

triangulation which involves using multiple theoretical perspectives to examine and interpret the data.

In this research study, sources triangulation has been achieved through the three phases of data collected from the focus group of SME entrepreneurs/business owners, one-to-one interviews of entrepreneurs/business owners and then interviews/focus group with staff from the case study's SME organization. Other valid sources of data for such qualitative research (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994), such as completed anonymous questionnaires, organization charts, emails, respondent validation meetings with staff and presentations from the organization over a period of four years, were also used for the data collection and analysis.

Saunders et al., (2017), identified four types (models) of saturation in qualitative research namely theoretical saturation, inductive thematic saturation, a priori thematic saturation and data saturation. The following Table 3.5 describes and show the principal focus of each type of saturation as provided by the authors.

Model	Description	Principal Focus
Theoretical saturation	Relates to the development of theoretical categories; related to grounded theory methodology	Sampling
Inductive thematic saturation	Relates to the emergence of new codes or themes	Analysis
A priori thematic saturation	Relates to the degree to which identified codes or themes are exemplified in the data	Sampling
Data Saturation	Relates to the degree to which new data repeat what was expressed in previous data	Data Collection

Table 3.5 Models of saturation in the research process adapted from Saunders et al., (2017)

According to Saunders et al., (2017), the first model (theoretical saturation) falls within grounded theory as it uses the development of categories to develop theory. The second model (inductive thematic saturation) shows that saturation is reached during analysis when no new codes or themes emerge. The third model (a priori

thematic saturation) refers to how pre-determined codes or themes are adequately represented in the data. The fourth model (data saturation) occurs when the data sources such as interviews begin to provide the same information with no new data created. Data saturation occurs when the data sources such as interviews begin to provide the same information with no new data created and in the analysis stage, saturation occurs when no new categories or themes emerge. On this basis, it can be shown that both data saturation and qualitative analysis saturation were reached in this study, as illustrated in the data sources provided in Appendix (I) and evidenced in the data analysis provided in Chapters 4 and 5. The data sources map visually illustrates the gaps and similarities found between the data sources and the themes from the findings and themes from the literature (See Appendix I). This is also evidenced in the findings and discussions chapters, showing the recurrences of categories and themes from all three phases of data collection and analysis.

3.10 Data Collection and Timeline

According to Creswell (2014), data collection involves a series of interconnected steps aimed at gathering information to answer the research questions and meet the research objectives. To do this, the researcher must i) locate the site or individual(s) to study; ii) gain access and establish rapport so that participants will be willing to provide information; iii) determine strategy for purposeful sampling of the site or individual(s); and iv) determine the rationale for the selected site or individual. This explains how data for this study has been collected. Data was collected over three phases. First was the initial pilot study of 8 SME entrepreneur business owners using a focus group. This was followed by the second phase of conducting semi-structured, one-to-one interviews of 12 SME entrepreneurial business owners. The third phase was the collection of data from one of the SME organizations founded by two participant SME entrepreneurs from phase two. During phase three, data collected included 11 separate in-depth semi-structured one-to-one interviews consisting of the SME entrepreneur CEO, COO, their heads of departments and staff; 14 completed questionnaires of individuals from the SME who were not interviewed; and a separate focus group with staff that were not interviewed or had not completed a questionnaire. The flowchart below (Figure 3.4) illustrates the timeline for data collection in the three phases.

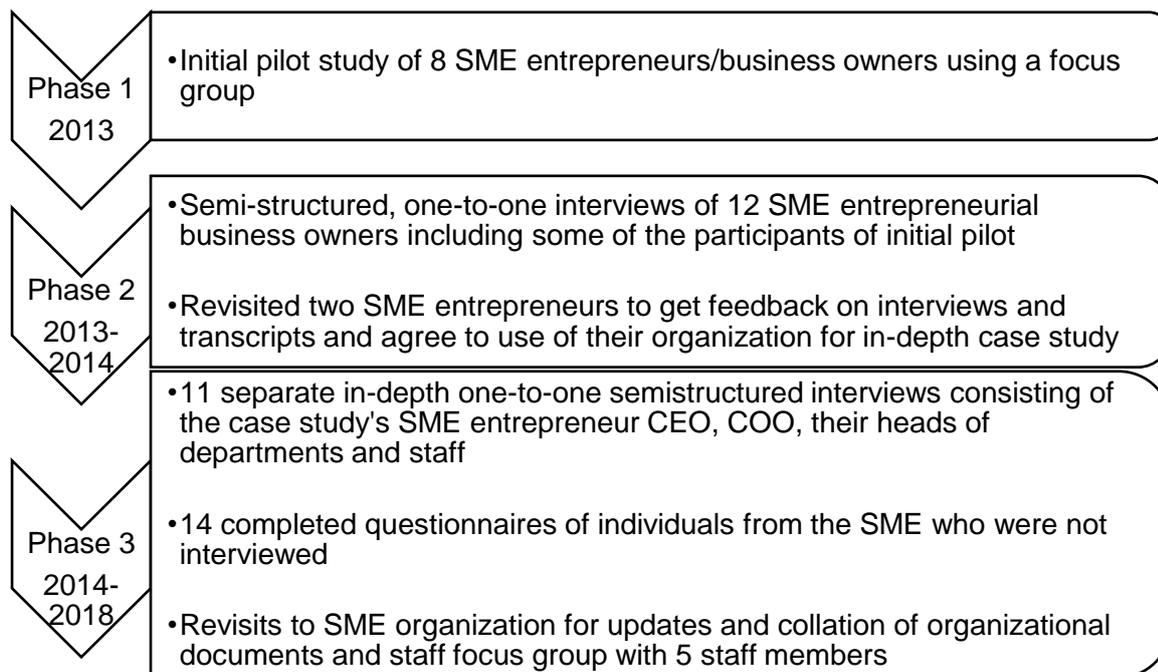


Figure 3.4 Illustration of the three phases of data collection

3.10.1. Phase one: data collection: Pilot focus group of the SME EBOs

SME entrepreneurs and business managers were first interviewed in a focus group of entrepreneurs and small business owners to share their views on anxiety. Participants were selected because they were all entrepreneurs and/or small business owners within a variety of small business environments, including professional services, insurance, retail, construction, graphic design, consulting, lighting manufacturers, electrical contractors, interior designers and project management services. The participants and researcher were known to each other as they formed a social network group of SME business owners and entrepreneurs in the Gloucestershire region. The following Table 3.6 shows the list of SME Entrepreneurs/Business Owners (EBOs) from the focus group and coded initials allocated for ease of reference in the findings in Chapter 4.

EBO 1	EBO 2	EBO 3	EBO 4	EBO 5	EBO 6	EBO 7	EBO 8
TL	AM	CHS	MT	HD	CH	SD	SB

Table 3.6 Codes for Entrepreneurs/Business Owners (EBO) from pilot focus group

An open discussion was conducted in the form of a focus group, where the SME entrepreneurs/small business owners were asked to openly discuss their own views,

understanding, perceptions and experiences of anxiety. A briefing paper (see Appendix A) about the research and topic was given to each participant before the focus group interview. Participants were then allowed to discuss in an unstructured manner their perceptions, feelings, experiences, opinions and views about the topic of anxiety as an SME entrepreneur/business owner. The focus group session lasted for about an hour and was held at the Cheltenham Film and Photographic Studios where participants met as a group of SME business owners for a networking event. Kitzinger (1998) suggested in her study that interactions between focus group participants tend to be either complementary or argumentative. Perhaps due to the fact that the participants were initially known to each other through a network, the focus group session was very complementary, and participants shared their opinions and perspectives in a very open and unstructured manner.

However, the limitations of focus groups are well documented, such as the problems of group effects (Krueger, 2006) and reticent speakers who may tend to hog the stage. This was the case in this session and as the facilitator, so it was necessary to ensure that other participants had their say when one individual was perhaps speaking too much. Another limitation of focus groups which was evident in this research was the fact that in group contexts, participants may express and attach with the expected viewpoints (Janis, 1991), for example, generally accepted view that “the recession causes anxiety for business owners” rather than more personal individual reasons. Thus, it was essential to also conduct one-to-one interviews with the participants.

3.10.2. Phase two data collection: SME EBO interviews

One-to one-semi-structured interviews were then conducted with some of the focus group participants and additional SME entrepreneurs on various dates and times in 2013 and each interview lasted approximately one hour. Questionnaires for the interview were formulated using data from the focus group. All the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed, producing approximately 130 pages of transcriptions (see Appendix E for examples of EBO interview transcripts). The EBO interview data were also used for a pilot project study that culminated in the attendance of a conference in 2014 to present a paper on the initial findings and the production of a joint paper presented at the European Academy of Management (EURAM)

conference in 2017 (see Appendix K). The list of SME entrepreneurs showing their titles, size of SME and interviewee allocated codes is presented in Table 3.7 for ease of reference in the findings and discussion chapters. In the EBO interviews, eight participants were micro business owners as they had less than five employees. The remaining five were either small (three participants) or medium sized (two participants) entrepreneurs/ business owners. They have been given the codes P which stands for Participant and a number for each ranging from 1 to 12.

Title of Interviewee	Type of SME	Code
Director	Micro	P1
Director	Micro	P2
Chief Executive Officer	Medium	P3
Chief Operations Officer	Medium	P4
Managing Partner	Small	P5
Managing Director	Micro	P6
Director	Small	P7
Owner Director	Micro	P8
Sole Trader/Director	Micro	P9
General Manager	Small	P10
Co-owner with Spouse	Micro	P11
Co-owner with Spouse	Micro	P12

Table 3.7 Codes/List of SME entrepreneur and business owner interviewees

3.10.3. Phase three data collection: Case study organization

A “purposeful sample” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Corley & Giola, 2004, p. 180) of participants from the SME headquarters based in the UK were chosen because they were most able to give information on issues affecting the SME business as a whole. During the period of this longitudinal study, the SME organization has seen changes and expanded to more developing countries. However, the focus of this research is only on the founding entrepreneurs and staff situated in the main headquarters in the UK and not on their employees in other jurisdictions outside of the UK. The entrepreneurs, senior managers and staff of the entrepreneurial SME organization

were interviewed on separate occasions to explore further the findings from the initial pilot. The senior managers and employees at all hierarchical levels within the organization were interviewed from the different functional departments between 2015 and 2018. The one-to-one interviews aimed to find out the meanings, perceptions, feelings and experiences of anxiety and how anxiety is manifested at the different relational levels in the organization. Interviews lasted approximately one hour. The focus of the questioning was on capturing the feelings, perceptions and experiences of individuals, as well as finding narrative descriptions of anxiety in the context of entrepreneurship and enterprises. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed, producing approximately 200 pages of transcriptions (see Appendix F for examples of interview transcripts).

Using the same questionnaire as the one used for the entrepreneurs/business owners and semi-structured interviews, 14 employees completed the same questionnaire anonymously because they did not want to be interviewed. These were completed by the participants either electronically or by using the hard copies (see Appendix D for an example of the completed questionnaire). In addition, a staff focus group with a team of staff members who were not interviewed or who had not completed a questionnaire was also conducted. This focus group's interviews were also transcribed (see Appendix H for transcription). The following three tables (3.8, 3.9 and 3.10) show the interviewees' titles, focus group participant titles and questionnaire respondent titles with codes given to each participant for ease of reference in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 of this study:

Title of Interviewee	Code
Chief Executive Officer	CE1
Chief Operations Officer	CO1
Head of Dept/Executive Board	HD1
Head of Department	HD2
Head of Department	HD3
Senior Manager	SM1
Senior Manager	SM2
Senior Consultant	SC1
Manager	MA1

Manager	MA2
Administrator	AD1
IT Analyst	IT1

Table 3.8 Codes for Entrepreneurial SME interviewees

Staff Focus Group Participant Title	Code
Software Engineer	STF1
Business Analyst	STF2
Software Engineer	STF3
Test Analyst	STF4
Software Engineer	STF5

Table 3.9 Codes for Entrepreneurial SME staff focus group participants

Title of Staff Questionnaire Respondent	Code
Team/staff member	STQ1
Team/staff member	STQ2
Team/staff member	STQ3
Manager	STQ4
Team/staff member	STQ5
Manager	STQ6
Team/staff member	STQ7
Team/staff member	STQ8
Team/staff member	STQ9
Team/staff member	STQ10
Head of Dept.	STQ11
Team/staff member	STQ12
Team/staff member	STQ13
Team/staff member	STQ14

Table 3.10 Codes for Entrepreneurial SME staff questionnaire respondents

During the five-year period (2013–2018), there was regular contact with the case study organization through visits, emails and working with the Chief Operations Officer, HR

Director, L&D Consultant and Finance Director on issues concerning the organization and the HR Director, Finance Director, L&D Consultant, a Senior Manager and Mangere all visited the University of Gloucestershire as guest speakers to come and talk to undergraduate students about the organization and their roles. In addition to the visits, organizational documents such as organizational charts, strategic documents from the organization's website and training/guest lecture materials were also used as sources of data. Scott (1990) provides four criteria for assessing the quality of official organizational documents and records. The first is *authenticity*, which asks whether there is evidence of genuine and unquestionable origin of the documents. The second criterion is *credibility*, which is concerned with evidence that the document is free from error and not distorted. The third criterion is *representativeness*, which checks whether the official document is typical of its kind. The fourth criterion is "meaning", which asks if the evidence is clear and comprehensible. This rigorous approach has been applied in the data collection strategies of organizational documents. The documents were used to support the findings and data analysis in this study. However, as the documents were not created for the specific purposes of the research, conclusions cannot be made from the documents on their own.

3.11 Data Analysis

The majority of qualitative data collected over the three phases were mainly in the form of one-to-one semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews which were then transcribed into a large quantity of text data. Text data is described as including verbal, print or electronic forms and can be obtained from narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations or print media such as articles, books or manuals (Kondrack, Wellman & Amundson, 2002). In this study, text data includes notes from the pilot SME entrepreneur focus group, transcribed interviews, completed questionnaires, transcribed staff focus group interviews and organizational documents which were analysed using mainly qualitative content analysis. Vignettes are used in the findings chapters to illustrate the rich data from the participants.

3.11.1 Qualitative content analysis

A qualitative content analysis approach was adopted as the preferred data coding and data analysis method. Qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for the “subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005 p.1278). Qualitative content analysis allows for categories to emerge out of data and allows the researcher to make an analysis of the contextual meaning of the item of data being analysed (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). The view that using qualitative content analysis focuses on the content or contextual meaning of the text is supported by various academics (McTavish & Pirro, 1990; Monaghan, Budd, Thorp & Donohew, 1968; Tesch, 1990). The reason why this approach is adopted is because it is a flexible approach (Cavanagh 1997; King, 2004) which, as King (2004) states, allows from coding (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000) to organizing themes. The process of identifying categories and themes in qualitative content analysis is “iterative” and “recursive” (Given, 2008 p. 120), thus the researcher in qualitative content analysis revisits the content/ data several times to form categories and themes which may even overlap, as evidenced in the findings of this study (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Hsieh and Shannon (2005 p.1286) indicated that rather than being just one method, the applications of content analysis show three distinct methods which are: i) conventional, ii) directed or iii) summative content analysis. All three methods are used to interpret meaning from the content of text data, but the “differences among the approaches are coding schemes, origins of codes, and threats to trustworthiness”. Firstly, conventional content analysis is described as coding categories derived directly from the text data. Secondly, with the directed content analysis method, the analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes. Thirdly, with a summative content analysis method, the approach involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context. In this study, both summative and conventional qualitative data analysis processes are followed. In conventional qualitative content analysis, the steps taken for data analysis are illustrated by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) as follows:

1. Data analysis starts with reading all data repeatedly to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the whole (Given, 2008; Tesch, 1990).

2. Data are read word by word to derive codes (Given, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 2002; Miles Huberman & Saldana, 2013; Morse & Field, 1995) by first highlighting the exact words from the text that appear to capture key thoughts or concepts.

3. The researcher approaches the text by making notes of his or her first impressions, thoughts and initial analysis. As this process continues, labels for codes emerge that are reflective of more than one key thought. These often come directly from the text and then become the initial coding scheme (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000; Given, 2008).

4. Codes then are sorted into categories based on how different codes are related and linked. These emergent categories are used to organize and group codes into meaningful clusters (Coffey & Atkinson, 2013; Patton, 2002). The derived categories can represent either explicit communication or inferred communication, since the aim of qualitative content analysis is “to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314).

5. Definitions/themes for each category, subcategory and code are developed. To prepare for reporting the findings, exemplars for each code and category are identified from the data (King, 2004).

The above steps have been adopted in this study, allowing a process of data analysis which involves codification, categorisation and the creation of themes from the categories. Due to its systematic approach, qualitative content analysis is often confused with grounded theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Grounded theory was an approach of qualitative data analysis considered but deemed not to be the most suitable. Glaser and Strauss (1967) initially developed grounded theory to legitimise qualitative research analysis as empirically grounded in theory. They saw grounded theory as an iterative process in which the collection of data and analysis can happen simultaneously. However, Strauss and Corbin (1998) are seen to have moved away from the initial focus on developing theory (Glaser, 1992) to developing concepts. The

approach adopted by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) allows for the interpretation and analysis of the qualitative data with the aim of theory creation. According to Charmaz (2014), grounded theory allows for an initial stage of open or initial coding where data is read through several times to create labels for chunks of data that summarize what the researcher sees happening with the data (stage 1). Examples of participants' words are recorded to establish properties of each code, and then a collection of codes allows for data to be grouped into concepts (stage 2). The concepts are then grouped into categories (stage 3), which then leads to the creation of theory (stage 4). It has been acknowledged that in grounded theory, there are variant and contrasting approaches (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). Grounded theory sets out a rigid systematic process that must be followed (Bryan & Bell, 2011). For example, it does not allow the use of prior themes and literature in analysis and building theory. Bernard, Wutich and Ryan (2016) explain that in grounded theory, there is a requirement to theorise in all the stages as indicated above.

As in grounded theory, qualitative content analysis allows for presenting and analysing data using a process of codification, categorising and creation of themes but, in contrast to grounded theory, this can be done with greater flexibility (King, 2004). With qualitative content analysis, coding and categorisation of the data enable the data to be systematically classified and put into a hierarchical order, which assists the analytical process. As the data collection proceeds, the approach is subjected to constant revision. Qualitative content analysis allows for introducing new codes or altering or changing the level of existing codes. Qualitative content analysis is an approach which also allows for the creation of a conceptual framework following data analysis.

However, there are weaknesses to qualitative content analysis. For example, not properly understanding the context and meaning could lead to not identifying relevant categories. This can result in findings that do not accurately represent the data. This can raise issues of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nobel & Smith, 2015). In this study, this potential limitation was considered, and so the coding and analysis process was frequently revisited until the key themes and relationships had been established and sources triangulated.

3.11.2 The manual coding process

In the early stages of data analysis, NVivo was considered for the process of data analysis. But an attempt to use NVivo was abandoned, with a preferred choice of manual coding adopted. This is because manual coding provided an opportunity to personally explore the interview data rather than through a software programme. Also, an effective use of NVivo required time dedicated to a period of training which was not practical and the pilot focus group data which forms part of this study had already been coded and analysed manually. In this study, the practical steps for codification stipulated by Saldana (2013) which support the qualitative content analysis was adapted because they illustrate how the codification of qualitative data can be followed by the creation of categories, which then leads to the creation of themes, and this in turn leads to the formation of a conceptual framework. Since the aim of this study is to explore and gain an understanding of the emotion of anxiety in SMEs, a descriptive coding method as suggested by Saldana (2013) was utilised to take the first step of finding the initial/open codes from the data. Bias was accounted for by regular discussion of the research data with two senior academic professors, which culminated in writing a conference paper (Allen et al., 2017). Therefore, personal researcher bias was reduced, and the data was analysed with academic rigour (Lincoln & Guba, 1995).

In this study, the collected data was transcribed verbatim as recommended in qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2013). All data was read repeatedly to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the whole (Tesch, 1990) and notes were made of key words. The data was then read word by word and key words/descriptions highlighted manually for the codification. Text direct from the data were used for the codification, which then led to the creation of categories. The categories were then sorted into clusters of themes in accordance with the conventional qualitative content analysis process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This manual process of coding was adopted in each of the three phases of data analysis as described below.

There are possible disadvantages with the use of manual coding. It is time-consuming, and so it is possible that by rushing the process, this can potentially lead to material

that is related, or could mean data may be overlooked. As indicated in sections 3.8 and 3.9 above, rigour has been achieved in this study through peer debriefing in conferences, prolonged engagement, triangulation of sources and data saturation. (Denzin, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nobel & Smith (2015); Saunders et al., 2017).

3.11.3 Phase one data analysis: Pilot study of SME entrepreneurs and business owners focus group

The pilot focus group with SME entrepreneurs/business owner qualitative data were analysed by an initial simple process of using the key words from the focus group questions and participant direct quotes as the open codes (Saldana, 2013). The participant responses were divided into categories. Then the relationships between and among the categories led to the creation of initial themes. A broad range of themes were identified which were then used to inform the questionnaires used for the semi-structured one- to-one interviews. For this phase in the research process, the aim was not to create conceptual theory but to gain a broad understanding of how SME entrepreneurs view anxiety and their interpretations and experiences of anxiety. The objective of the pilot was to obtain data that informed the design of the questions for the main research. In the findings chapter, the descriptions and interpretations of participants are often used as vignettes to illustrate the findings from the initial focus group.

3.11.4 Phase two data analysis: One-to-one semi-structured interviews with SME entrepreneurs and business owners

The phase two data consist of the individual interviews of the SME entrepreneurs and business owners using an inductive process of open coding (Saldana, 2013) from the direct words and descriptions given by the participants. For example, wide-ranging codes were identified within the data that could be associated with the emotion of anxiety. The second cycle of analysis (Given, 2008; Saldana, 2013; Wicks, 2010) involved identifying categories and the relationships between and among the categories and thus the creation of possible higher themes (Corley & Gioia, 2004; King, 2004). Thus, coded data were refined into a set of twenty-eight categories and then into nine themes such as “meanings of anxiety” and “anxieties due to the nature of the entrepreneurial SME”. Finally, the nine themes were analysed in order to

distinguish anxiety at organizational, social and personal levels for an emergent conceptual framework. In the findings chapter, in-depth descriptions and interpretations of participant's direct quotes are often used as vignettes to illustrate the findings from the SME entrepreneurs and business owners.

3.11.5 Phase three data analysis: Case study organization

Interviews were held with an entrepreneurial SME organization's staff at all levels to understand the impact of anxiety at the individual, team and organizational levels, similar to phase one and two's data analyses and influenced by the prior findings from phases one and two (Given, 2008). Then each significant piece of information in the interviews and focus group transcripts were highlighted and the statements attributed with open codes. The interview data was then analysed to see the categories that emerged from the open coding. This involved searching for the relationships between and among the categories. The set categories were then divided into themes. Key themes were also identified in order to distinguish between the different levels of anxiety (organizational, team and personal) to support the generation of a conceptual framework as required in qualitative content analysis. In the findings chapter, in-depth descriptions and interpretations of participants are often used as vignettes to illustrate the findings from SME participants.

3.12 Research Limitations

There are disadvantages of using a qualitative methodology which include issues such as time constraints, volume of data generated, potential personal bias and complexity of analysis. Qualitative data has been generally criticized by quantitative researchers for being too subjective, difficult to replicate, not easily transferable and lacking in transparency (Bryman & Bell, 2006, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). According to Cope (2005), asking about "lived experiences" does provide its own complexities because the interpretative accounts that individuals provide may not give the "full story" as indicated by Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 12, 2012). Hence, there has to be a recognition that any accounts of human experience are simply a "photographic slice of life" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 155). Hence, such research can be seen as limited because it is located "in a particular context at a particular time" (Cope, 2005, p. 10).

It was important that personal bias was checked to avoid contamination of data and that the research was conducted from an academic rather than a practitioner's perspective. In this study, contamination of data was mitigated through the use of joint discussions in academic groups such as the University of Gloucestershire's academic writing club, attendance of courses on postgraduate research skills and presentations at conferences as previously mentioned and discussed in section 7.11 of Chapter 7 to gain feedback on data collected. However, the social constructivist and social constructionist paradigms allow for "the researcher's values and dispositions [to] influence the knowledge that is constructed through interaction with the phenomenon and participants in the inquiry" (Given 2008, p.118). Hence the data analysis process, takes into account contextual factors, existing literature, researcher prior knowledge and socially constructed accounts of the participants as a whole (Young & Collin, 2004).

In addition, as this is a qualitative case study with a relatively small sample size, broad generalisations cannot be made (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Nobel and Smith, 2015; Saunders et al., 2009). However, this factor has been mitigated by the objective of ensuring taking strategic practical steps to ensure "trustworthiness" (Lincoln & Guba, 1995; Nobel & Smith, 2015) of the data.

Other practical limitations in this research include the following:

- Following the initial focus group session and one-to-one interviews, there was no chance to go back to interview some of the SME entrepreneurs and business owners that participated in the pilot focus group.
- Gaining access to sensitive organizational documents was not possible at the SME organization.
- The use of a manual coding process was time-consuming.

In summary, as indicated in sections 3.8 and 3.9 above, "truth value", "consistency", "neutrality" and "applicability" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); validation (Leitch, Hill & Harrison, 2009); and trustworthiness (Nobel & Smith, 2015) were established through peer debriefing, prolonged engagement and triangulation. (Denzin, 1978, 2012).

3.13 Research Ethics

Ethics refers to “the appropriateness of your behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work or who are affected by it” (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 183–184). In this study, the research ethics guidelines were applied at all stages as required for postgraduate doctoral research. One of the key issues was to ensure informed consent. Each participant was given an interview consent form to read and sign in advance of all interviews and focus group sessions. The form contained information such as an invitation to participate, risks, rights to privacy, confidentiality of records and dissemination (Siedman, 2013) in accordance with the University of Gloucestershire research guidelines (see Appendix C for the interview consent form used). All participants received a debriefing before interviews and focus group sessions to get their permission to proceed.

Feedback was continuously given to the participants and the SME organization over a period of five years during the data collection and analysis stages. As mentioned earlier in section 3.8, feedback from participants was also sought as part of the study. This ensured the achievement of respondent validations (Leitch, Hill & Harrison, 2009). Participants were given the chance, where appropriate and whilst maintaining confidentiality, to comment on the interview transcripts and on whether the final themes and concepts created adequately reflected the phenomena being investigated (Nobel & Smith, 2015). Participants were given the opportunity to withdraw from participation at any point and were advised that they were not obliged to take part in the study and could, at their discretion, not fill out the questionnaire, end the interview or make suggestions for a different approach at any stage, even after they had consented to taking part. Contact information was provided to make it easy for the participants to get in touch and inform me if they wished to withdraw as indicated in the briefing paper (Appendix A) and consent form (Appendix C). Clearance from the University Ethics Committee was not required since this study involved adults over the age of 18 years.

All data are kept confidential. The anonymity of participants was protected as individuals were not identified at any point in the study by their names. Interview and focus group transcripts were assigned codes which were then used when presenting

transcript quotations in the report of findings in Chapters 4 and 5. Furthermore, confidentiality was made clear to the participants. All records including transcripts, interview notes and documents from research have been kept, showing a trail and ensuring interpretations of data are consistent and transparent. Data collected for the study were treated with the strictest confidence. The computer on which data was stored was password protected and paper records were kept in a locked filing cabinet. Upon completion of the study, completed questionnaires will be destroyed and audiotapes of recorded interviews will be wiped. This conforms to the University of Gloucestershire guidelines on research ethics.

3.14 Summary of the Chapter and Addressing the Research Objectives

In summary, an iterative inductive theoretical (Given, 2008) approach has been adopted in this study. The research paradigms of interpretivism, constructivism and social constructionism have been discussed and justified, followed by the justifications for choosing a case study and a multi-level approach in this study. The importance of trustworthiness in qualitative research was illustrated by the practical steps taken to achieve this. The choice of research methods such as focus groups and interviews and triangulation of sources has been shown. Information was also provided on how the data was collected and analysed, reaching saturation. In the case of data analysis, the use of qualitative content was adopted due to its flexibility in application. Finally, the research limitations and ethical considerations have also been covered.

This Chapter begins to address the research objectives through the three phases of data collection and analysis as illustrated in Table 3.11 Below:

Research Objective (RO)	RO 1, 2 and 3 achieved through three phases of data collection and analysis
RO1- Understand the underlying emotions of anxiety in organizations, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial SMEs.	Phase one data collection and analysis using the pilot study of SME entrepreneurs and business owners through a focus group.
RO2 -Explore the feelings, perceptions and experiences of anxiety of entrepreneurs/business owners and staff and what they mean in an entrepreneurial SME through interviews and focus groups.	Phase two data collection and analysis: One-to-one semi-structured interviews with SME entrepreneurs and business owners. Phase three data collection and analysis of the case study organization using interviews, questionnaires and focus groups.
RO3- Assess anxiety within the organization from the perspectives of the different relational levels in the entrepreneurial SME organization.	Phase two data collection and analysis: One-to-one semi-structured interviews with SME entrepreneurs and business owners. Phase three data collection and analysis of the case study organization using interviews, questionnaires and focus groups.

Table 3.11 How the research objectives are addressed in Chapter 3

In the next chapter, the detailed findings from the first two phases of the study are analysed and illustrated.

CHAPTER 4:

FINDINGS: PART ONE

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the analysis and findings of the data collected from phase one (SME entrepreneur/business owner pilot focus group) and phase two (the SME entrepreneur one-to-one semi-structured interviews). Chapter 5 covers the analysis and findings from phase three (entrepreneurial SME organization case study). Analysis of the data and findings illustrated in this chapter will be linked to the literature and discussion in Chapter 6. Data collected from the initial pilot focus group are discussed in section 4.2 below, showing the findings and analysis of the focus group of SME Entrepreneurs and Business Owners (EBO). In section 4.3, an explanation is provided for the phase one categories, themes and their relational levels using a process of qualitative content analysis. In section 4.4, the findings from the one-to-one interviews with EBOs in phase two are discussed. In section 4.5, the analysis of the phase two data, shows the open codes, categories, themes with their relational levels. Section 4.6 covers how the findings from both phases are linked to the organizational-macro level aspects. Section 4.7 discusses broadly the social- meso aspect of the findings from both phases. Section 4.8 covers the individual-micro (the personal feelings and contradictions associated with anxiety) from both phases. Section 4.9 identifies the gaps between the phase one and phase two findings, and section 4.10 provides a summary of this chapter. Table 4.1 below is the structure of Chapter 3.

4.2 Phase one- Findings and analysis of the initial focus group of EBOs
4.3 Categories and themes/their relational levels of phase one findings
4.4 Phase two- Findings from one to one interview of the EBOs
4.5 Phase two- Categories, themes and relational levels
4.6-4.8 The macro, meso and-micro analysis of the phase two findings
4.9 Comparing the gaps between the phase one and phase two findings
4.10 Summary of the Chapter and Addressing the Research Questions

Table 4.1 Summary of the Chapter 4 structure

Findings from the pilot SME entrepreneur focus group session were used to influence the drafting of a questionnaire designed for the semi-structured one-to-one interviews. The interviews allowed for in-depth questioning and the probing of responses (Collis & Hussey, 2003) from participants. The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to gain a further understanding of the lived experiences of participants and the meanings they make of those experiences (Cope, 2005; Siedman, 2013).

4.1.2 Using qualitative content analysis to analyse the EBO data

Using the steps for qualitative content analysis as discussed in section 3.11.1 of Chapter 3, the data was analysed using the process of open coding, categorisation and the creation of themes from the categories as follows:

- 1 The focus group and interview transcripts were analysed by reading all data repeatedly to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the whole.
2. All data was read word by word to derive codes manually by first highlighting the exact words from the text that appeared to capture key thoughts or concepts.
3. Each transcript and notes taken were read and highlighted to obtain first impressions, thoughts and initial analysis. As this process continued, labels for codes were created that emerged from the data and were reflective of a key area of thought. These words often came directly from the text and then became the initial open-coding scheme.
4. The open codes were then sorted into categories based on how different codes are related and linked. These emergent categories are used to organize and group codes into meaningful clusters (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Patton, 2002). The derived categories represented either the explicit communication or inferred communication, since the aim of qualitative content analysis is “to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314).
5. Definitions/themes for each category, subcategory and code were then developed to prepare for reporting the findings. The exemplars for each code and category are identified from the data and shown in the following sections.

4.2 Phase One: Findings from the Initial Focus Group of EBOs

SME entrepreneurs and business managers formed the initial focus group and were selected because they were all from a network group of SME business owners and entrepreneurs in the Gloucestershire region. The focus group was convened in the Sandler Training offices at the Cheltenham Film Studios and lasted for about 45 minutes. Notes were taken and transcribed for the purposes of analysis.

The pilot focus group data was first broadly analysed by the use of the focus group questions and participant key word as the open codes (Saldana, 2013) to capture key thoughts and concepts. Once key words were grouped together, the participant responses were divided into categories. Then the broad themes from the categories were identified (Corley & Gioia, 2004). In this initial phase of the research, the purpose was to gain a broad understanding of how SME entrepreneurs/business owners define anxiety and their perceptions of the causes of anxiety within their businesses. The following statements illustrate the verbatim (Schreier, 2013) key words provided by the initial focus group participants to the questions *what is anxiety and what are the causes of anxiety?*

Key responses by pilot focus group members to the question, ***what is “anxiety” for SME business owners*** were as follows:

Stress”, “Fear” “Worry” causes anxiety

“Anxiety = sustained worry over a period that has a debilitating effect”

“Is anxiety a bad thing”?

“Need to be aware of danger”

“Does it have different names”?

Key responses by pilot focus group members to the question, ***what are the causes of “anxiety” in the SME context?***

- “Scale of enterprise will impact on the level of anxiety and where it is experienced”
- “Anxiety is related to money”

“Making decisions causes: - “Overload” ,“Paralysis”

“Post event rationalization i.e. ascribing intent or an outcome to a decision that only became apparent after the decision was made”

“Dealing with uncertainty + ambiguity causes anxiety”.

“Gender linked to anxiety “

“Personality theories - -links to Introversion”

“Age, the impact of anxiety is different at different ages.

“Influence of childhood experiences affect our levels of anxiety”

“Option – Risk – Fear causes Anxiety”

“Pipeline issues as a source of Anxiety i.e. concerns about next contract”

“Our response to situations is often determined by the scripts we carry in our heads”.

“Denial of anxiety showing you’re stressed and being very busy is prized “

“Shift in politics where there is an absence of taking responsibility”

“Stress as external - workload, bank, finance, busy”

“Anxiety as inner state, showing anxiety or talking about anxiety is equivalent to weakness”

“Relationships going poorly are very anxiety inducing”

“Threats to reputation are very anxiety inducing”

“Trust is SME capital. If our clients lose trust and confidence in us, then this is serious”.

“Range of tasks needing to be done is daunting as an SME

“Selling as a necessary skill but one that many sole traders shy away from

“Knowing when to charge the right fees causes anxiety”

From the initial open coding of participant comments, broad categories were then identified and shown below with supporting participant words. For example, words about the size or type of SME would fall into the category of nature and size of the business.

Category: Definition of anxiety:

“Stress”, “Fear” “Worry”, “Anxiety = sustained worry over a period that has a debilitating effect”. “Is anxiety a bad thing”? “Need to be aware of danger”, “Does it have different names”?

Category: Nature and size of the business:

“Scale of enterprise will impact on the level of anxiety and where it is experienced”

Category: Money related anxieties:

“Anxiety is related to money”

Category: Decision making causes anxieties

“Making decisions causes: -“Overload” ,“Paralysis”, “Post event rationalization i.e. ascribing intent or an outcome to a decision that only became apparent after the decision was made”

“Options – taking risk – fear causes Anxiety”

Category: Pipeline concerns:

“Pipeline issues as a source of Anxiety i.e. concerns about next contract”

“Dealing with uncertainty + ambiguity causes anxiety”

Category: Business relationships, reputation and trust:

“Relationships going poorly are very anxiety inducing”, “Threats to reputation are very anxiety inducing”, “Trust is SME capital. If our clients lose trust and confidence in us, then this is serious”

Category: Workload: busy, external pressures

“Stress as external - workload, banks, finance, busy”, “Range of tasks needing to be done is daunting as an SME”

Category: Age

“Age, the impact of anxiety is different at different ages. Influence of childhood experiences affect our levels of anxiety”

Category: Gender related issues/Age

“Gender linked to anxiety”

Category: Defences against anxiety-denial

“Denial of anxiety showing you’re stressed and being very busy is prized “

“Anxiety as inner state, showing anxiety or talking about anxiety is equivalent to weakness”

Category: Personality type and style

“Our response to situations is often determined by the scripts we carry in our heads”

“Shift in politics where there is an absence of taking responsibility”

“Personality theories - -links to Introversion”

Category: Business/entrepreneurial skills- lack of

“Selling as a necessary skill but one that many sole traders shy away from”

“Knowing when to charge the right fees causes anxiety”

See section 4.3 for an analytical discussion of the categories and Appendix (B) contains the EBO summary transcript from the focus group interview notes. Using the inductive process of iterative qualitative content analysis (Givens, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) from the open codes of key words, 12 categories were identified and then given 6 themes as illustrated below in Table 4.2:

Key categories from responses	Themes
Definition of anxiety	Meanings given to anxiety
Nature and size of the business	The nature of anxieties for SMEs
Money-related anxieties Pipeline concerns Business relationships, reputation and trust Workload: busy, external pressures	Causes of anxiety for SME entrepreneurs
Decision making-related issues	Entrepreneurial decision making and anxiety
Anxiety-denial	Entrepreneurs' defences against anxiety
Age Gender-related issues Personality type and style Business/entrepreneurial skills—lack of	The personal challenges of anxiety for entrepreneurs

Table 4.2 Data structure—categories and themes from phase one pilot focus group

The relational levels of the themes and the broad categories were analysed to see how anxiety manifested at personal, social and organizational levels for members of the initial SME entrepreneur/business owner focus group. The organizational level concerns the collective nature of anxiety in enterprises. The social/group level themes refer to anxiety as a social emotion and the personal level themes refers to the personal feelings associated with anxiety. This was done to see how the findings linked to the literature on the multi-level dynamics of emotion in enterprises

(Ashkanasy, 2014). Table 4.3 below shows the 12 identified broad categories, the 6 themes and their perceived relational levels from the EBO pilot focus group.

Key categories from responses	Themes	Relational levels
Definition of anxiety	Meanings given to anxiety	Organizational (macro), Social -(meso), Personal- (micro)
Nature and size of the business	The nature of anxieties for SMEs	Organizational
Money-related anxieties Pipeline concerns Business relationships, reputation and trust Workload: busy, External pressures	Causes of anxiety for SME entrepreneurs	Organizational and social
Decision making-related issues	Entrepreneur decision-making and anxiety	Organizational, social and personal
Anxiety—denial	Entrepreneurs' defences against anxiety	Organizational, social and personal
Age gender-related issues Personality type and style Business/entrepreneurial skills—lack of	The personal challenges of anxiety for entrepreneurs	Social and personal

Table 4.3 Multi-level dimensions of anxiety for the phase one pilot focus group

4.3 Making Sense of the Categories, Themes and Their Relational Levels- Phase One

In relation to the categories, whilst subjects such as money, decision making, and workload were common issues causing anxiety for all the participants, it was shown by the participants that the size of the SME, the nature of the business and personality of individuals also created anxieties. There was also evidence of the existence of defences against anxiety as shared by the participants. The categories and themes from the findings were found to be in a spectrum including 1) organizational-level experiences; 2) organizational-, social- and personal-level experiences and 3) social- and personal-level experiences as illustrated in Table 4.5 above. The following illustrations of responses are discussed to highlight the links between the categories, themes and levels.

4.3.1 Definition of anxiety (meanings given to anxiety/organizational, social and personal)

Participants defined anxiety as “stress”, “fear” and “worry”. Some questioned whether anxiety should be viewed as a “bad thing”, whilst others saw it as an “expectation of danger”. These definitions were from a personal-level perspective, but participants’ definitions were also influenced by their current social and organizational issues, for instance, being worried about the survival of a business due to the recession and partnership problems.

4.3.2 Nature and size of the business (nature of anxieties for SMEs/organizational)

Participants shared their anxieties related to the nature and type of business. All participants also discussed how the size of the SME impacts the levels of anxiety experienced. One micro business owner commented on the fact that she had to be “a jack of all trades” because she had no employees. This is deemed as an organizational level anxiety, as all the SME entrepreneurs and business owners saw the nature and size of the business as an inevitable factor for anxiety in SME organizations.

4.3.3 Money-related anxiety (causes of anxiety/organizational, social and personal)

Participants discussed finance, the current recession challenges and the impact on their businesses. In particular, participants with staff shared their anxieties relating to paying staff wages. The micro SMEs also shared their anxieties about the “lack of bank support” in the current economic climate and the “lack of government” support. Thus, the responses show the impact of personal, social and organizational factors causing money worries and anxieties.

4.3.4 Pipeline worries (causes of anxiety/organizational, social and personal)

Participants discussed anxieties caused by the need to look for employment or paid work due to slow business, not having enough clients and not having enough money. All participants shared that they had anxieties about issues such as gaining and maintaining new clients, new business projects, new business partners, new opportunities, the work pipeline and funds for their businesses.

4.3.5 Business relationship and trust anxieties (causes of anxiety/organizational, social and personal)

Participants stated that internal and external relationships going poorly were anxiety inducing, especially with customers or their business partners. Three participants shared that clients losing trust and confidence in their SME caused them anxiety, and two participants shared that their proneness to fear of losing control of their businesses also caused anxieties. Two participants revealed that threats to SME reputation caused anxiety. The responses expose the personal, social and organizational factors that cause money worries and anxieties for the participants.

4.3.6 Workload and external pressures (causes of anxiety/organizational, social and personal)

Participants shared how the wide range of tasks and responsibilities that needed to be done as an SME business owner created anxieties. Three participants shared that their busy workload and the staff shortages were causing them anxiety. The responses reveal that these anxieties were self-induced for some, whilst others were due to the pressures from employees, clients or customers (social). For others, anxiety was due

to the type of SME organization they belonged to because the workload and external pressures were heavier. For example, business owners with few or no employees had to perform various roles at once to meet client needs.

4.3.7 Decision making-related anxiety (causes of anxiety/organizational, social and personal)

Participants agreed that anxiety affected their decision making. Two participants said that work overload caused anxiety and affected their decision making. Four participants shared that they could not recruit more staff despite staff shortages due to anxieties about the economy and cash flow. Two participants disclosed that dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity in the business was causing anxiety. Two participants stated that the fear of expansion was causing anxiety and one participant said that when anxiety sometimes stops them from making decisions, they just allow things to happen. Thus, participants revealed how their decisions affected them personally, how their decisions were socially induced and how the anxieties about their organizations affected their decisions.

4.3.8 Anxiety-denial (defences against anxiety/organizational, social and personal)

Participants with staff said that they talked about anxiety with their staff on an ad hoc basis but there were no formal processes in place to deal with anxiety amongst staff. All participants shared that they did not show their anxieties or talk about their anxieties regarding the business with others openly. One participant said that it would be a sign of weakness from organizational and social perspectives if they did. One participant talked about the need to control anxiety and pretend in front of customers and clients even if one is anxious about the situation. These responses corresponded to the three levels because the defences against anxiety existed at the personal (fear of losing face), social (sharing/not sharing) and organizational levels (impact on the business if they shared their anxieties).

4.3.9 Age and gender related issues (personal challenges of anxiety/social and personal)

A husband-and-wife team shared that they had different responses to anxiety-inducing situations in their businesses because of gender and personality differences (personal). A participant discussed age (being over 50yrs Old), stating that it was the right time to become an entrepreneur because it would not be possible to get a job as an employee due to the participant's age (personal and social). One participant was worried that if the business failed, he would not be able to get a job due to age discrimination and was anxious about that (personal and social). One participant discussed how childhood experiences can cause anxiety.

4.3.10 Personality and leadership style (personal challenges of anxiety/social and personal)

Six participants shared that their personalities and leadership styles affected how they responded to business anxiety. One participant made the link between extroversion and introversion and discussed how he felt personality types affected levels of anxiety and leadership, with most participants agreeing. They also discussed how staff and clients would respond to the different personality and leadership styles.

4.3.11 Entrepreneurial and business skills (personal challenges of anxiety/social and personal)

Two participants indicated that not having the right entrepreneurial or business skills cause anxieties and talked about the need for small business owners and entrepreneurs to gain access to training to reduce anxieties about matters such as business accounts.

4.3.12 Summary of phase one

The categories from the initial findings were used to create a list of possible causes for anxiety. The interview questionnaire (see Appendix D) created after the initial focus group was used for the semi-structured one-to-one interviews and completed by the entrepreneurial SME staff during phase three data collection (see Chapter 5). Table 4.4 below is a summary of the EBO pilot focus group participants who responded to the 11 categories:

Key categories from responses	Number of participants from the total of eight who shared their views on the category
Definition of anxiety	All
Nature and size of business	All
Money-related anxieties	All
Pipeline worries	All
Business relationships and trust	Three
Workload, business, external pressures	Three
Decision making-related issues	All
Anxiety denial—defences	All
Age	Two
Gender-related	Two
Personality type and leadership style	Six
Business and entrepreneurial skills	Two

Table 4.4 Summary of pilot focus group EBO participants that responded to each category

4.4 Phase Two: Findings and Analysis of One-to-One Interviews of EBOs

Following the pilot focus group session, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 SME Entrepreneurs and Business Owners (EBOs), including two entrepreneurs who were appointed to grow the businesses on behalf of their owners. Four members of the pilot focus group agreed to participate in the one-to-one interviews. The interviews encouraged participants to respond openly about their understanding of anxiety and to share experiences and narratives relating to anxiety within their enterprises. Participants were asked to give their own definitions and interpretations of anxiety, if and how they shared their anxieties, how business decisions were affected by their anxieties and how others in their organizations were affected as a result. The interviewees were experienced entrepreneurs and business managers within a variety of small to medium-sized businesses (ranging from 0–150 employees), including professional services, insurance, retail, construction, graphic design, consulting, lighting manufacturers, electrical contractors, interior designers

and project management services. Access to the entrepreneurs was relatively easy because all participants were known to me, and I had recently owned and run a small business. This may have influenced the 12 participants to openly discuss their experiences of anxiety. The participants interviewed included 10 men and 2 women. See Appendix (E) for three sample copies of the twelve EBO interview transcripts. All twelve EBO interview transcripts can be provided on request. Interviews lasted approximately one hour, and they were digitally recorded and transcribed, producing 130 pages of transcriptions (around 70,000 words). The focus of the questioning during the interviews was on capturing the feelings, perceptions and experiences of individuals, as well as finding narrative descriptions of anxiety in the context of entrepreneurship and enterprise. The analysis progressed through a broad process of open coding which was used to identify the full range of words and short phrases used, for example, to define/describe anxiety within the data.

The first cycle of coding provided a strong sense of the complexity of the associations with anxiety as well as the broad range of feelings, perceptions and experiences. The second stage of coding strategy (Saldana, 2013) pinpointed the dominant codes in the data and made a bridge between the dominant codes and emerging categories. For example, there were distinctions in the data between respondents' physical (e.g. "I don't sleep well", "I get short tempered", etc.) and emotional experiences of anxiety. Similarly, there were different emotional responses, depending on whether their experience of anxiety was associated with fear (e.g. "of the unknown", "of failing", "of what we can't control") or worry/concern ("feeling apprehensive", "feeling stuck", "sad that things are not ... as they should be"). Therefore, physical symptoms, anxiety associated with fear, and anxiety associated with worry/concern generated the code: "experiencing anxiety". This led to the possibility of aligning key words and phrases (open coding) with context, interaction and process to produce order categories. An analysis of the complete data set was conducted to identify a range of combined categories based on the interpretations of the data as required in qualitative content analysis (Given, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). To ensure data trustworthiness, the steps of careful data management, feedback and debriefing with peers was followed to assess whether the conclusions reached were plausible (Corley & Gioia, 2004). Collectively, a set of 26 categories were created and then grouped into nine themes. Short narrative examples with the themes were later developed into vignettes. The

interpretation of the relationships between the 26 categories and 9 key themes are presented in Table 4.5 below.

Categories	Themes
1. Definition of anxiety	Meanings given to anxiety
2. The physical experience of anxiety 3. The emotional experience of anxiety	Experiencing anxiety as SME EBO
4. Anxiety about money 5. Anxiety about winning work/contracts: 6. Anxiety arising from risk 7. Anxiety over people and performance 8. Anxiety about the client 9. Anxieties from the external environment	Causes of anxiety for SME EBOs
10. Responsibilities and expectations 11. Anxiety has personal consequences 12. Anxiety has physical consequences	The personal challenges of anxiety for SME EBOs
13. Rationalization 14. Protection 15. Professionalism 16. Splitting work and family 17. Gendered stereotypes	EBO's' defences against anxiety
18. The anxieties of others:	EBO's sense of others' anxieties
19. From the leader's perspective 20. From the follower's perspective	Anxiety and (entrepreneurial) leadership
21. Anxiety helps to motivate and demotivate	Anxiety and excitement: The positive and negative effects of anxiety
22. The benefits and detriments of being small: 23. The tensions of partnerships 24. A sense of urgency 25. Financial worries and uncertainties 26. Making decisions	The nature of anxieties for SMEs

Table 4.5 Phase two data analysis for EBOs; 26 categories and 9 themes

4.5 Phase Two Findings: Illustration of the Categories, Themes and Relational Levels

Sections 4.5.1 to 4.5.8 provides a detailed illustration of the 26 numbered categories as shown in Table 4.5 above , key words by participants for each category and the attributed themes which are the subheadings:

4.5.1 Theme: Meanings given to anxiety

The theme of *meanings given to anxiety* is illustrated by the following category and words used by the participant EBOs as follows:

Category 1- Definition of anxiety: (worried, desperate, edginess, vulnerable, nervous, helpless, excitement, brave, resilient, etc.).The definitions of anxiety given by participant EBOs included particular emotions, with both positive and negative associations (e.g., worried, desperate, edginess, vulnerable, nervous, helpless, excitement, brave, resilient, etc.); allusions to anxiety in short phrases were also used (e.g., “a whiff of panic”, “bottling things up”, “a bit out on a limb”, “eating away at me”, etc.). These definitions indicate personal, social and organizational elements.

4.5.2 Themes: Experiences and causes of anxiety for the SME EBOs

The themes of experiences and *causes of anxiety* is illustrated by the categories and words used by the participant EBOs as follows:

Category 2-The physical experience of anxiety: (“I don’t sleep well”; “I get short-tempered”; “the world gets too big ... get backache”; “tiredness”; “it stops people ... debilitating”; “it spoils the rest of your life”; “it can consume you”)

Category 3-The emotional experience of anxiety 1: (*Fear* ... “of not knowing”; “of the unknown”; “of failing”; “of letting people down”; “of what we can’t control”.)
(*Worry/Concern* ... “feeling apprehensive”; “feeling stuck”; “sad that things are not ... as they should be”.)

Category 4 - Anxiety about money: (“So it’s money”; “it’s cash, cash is the key”; “95% is money”; “it comes down to money at the end of the day”.)

Category 5 - Anxiety about winning work/contracts: (“Where the next piece of work is coming from for sure” “every day I don’t win work is a day I notice”.)

Category 6 - Anxiety arising from risk: (“Its high risk ... we made a number of decisions where we were days away from being completely insolvent”; “to what extent you are willing to risk not having a buffer”.)

Category 7- Anxiety over people and performance: (“I’m really busting the guts to come up with your salary, and you are not pulling your weight”.)

Category 8 - Anxiety about the client: (“You don’t want to upset the client; you want to keep a good client relationship because you’re looking at, well, maybe more work after this one”.)

Category 9 - Anxieties from the external environment—for example, regulation and bureaucracy: (“The government pulling the rug from under our feet”; everything seems to be in the employee’s favour ... you have got to follow certain procedures”.)

The themes of experiences and causes of anxiety for the SME EBOs interviews are analysed and discussed in section 4.7 below from a social-meso relational perspective.

4.5.3 Theme: Personal challenges of anxiety for SME EBOs

Category 10 - Responsibilities and expectations: (“I feel very responsible (for) ... people and making sure that they are paid”; “I do set very high expectations for myself. It impacts my family, then I feel like I am letting the family down, then it’s a bit of a vicious circle because if I am anxious about something from a work point of view, I tend to try and work harder and you get sucked in”; “I hope I never have to do another start up, I really do. It’s not a job, it’s something, I mean it’s not a child, but it is somewhere between a job and a child”.)

Category 11 - Anxiety has personal consequences: (“I would be a nervous wreck all the time because we are high stress”; “(I get) bogged down thinking about it too much”; “I analyse everything too much. That’s me. That’s just what I do”; “wrought”; “very much pulled apart, put back together again badly”; “stretched out, scrunched up, twisted, stretched”; “one of the characteristics of anxiety as a response to pressure is that it’s very easy to hear or to tell oneself lies about what’s going on, how one feels, what one should do”.)

Category 12 - Anxiety has physical consequences: (“I actually take it, it feels, it hurts me, it physically makes me angry when a customer isn’t happy because I want us, the company to have done well”; “I think for me... physical exhaustion is probably the most prevalent. I think kind of being distracted ... I was physically present, but I was somewhere else”; “well, at times we did feel physically sick because we—we didn’t feel in control because we didn’t know what they were going to do”.)

The theme of personal challenges of anxiety for the SME EBOs is analysed and discussed in section 4.8 below which looks at this the from the personal-micro relational perspective.

4.5.4 Theme: EBO defences against anxiety

Category 13 - Rationalization: (“My response to anxiety or not knowing is to do a lot of research, to find out, to get everything, all my ducks lined up”; “It could force us to make quick decisions sometimes that aren’t necessarily the right ones”.)

Category 14 - Protection: (“You can’t share too much with the staff because we’re trying not to get them stressed. So, we try to protect them as much as possible”; “For a firm like ours ... even if we feel anxious, they [client] mustn’t see it. There’s got to be some form of clever camouflage. It’s just controlling it, isn’t it?”)

Category 15 - Professionalism: (“There’s this expectation that if you’re in business, then you need to be the ultimate professional ... you need to show people this professional mask all the time”.)

Category 16 - Splitting work and family: (“I guess I’ve always been more of a private person. I share my feelings with my family ... I don’t talk much about it to people at work”.)

Category 17- Gendered stereotypes: (“I am a bloke and we’re not, I don’t think men generally are terribly good at that and I’m as—well, I see myself as a fairly typical male and those sorts of things in bottling things up—well, not bottling, I wouldn’t bottle—but I would certainly keep things to my chest, close to my chest and I would say it’s my job to manage my anxiety”; “We are fabricators, it’s not a rough and ready trade, but it’s a man’s trade if you know what I mean. We are rough and ready kind of men who work with our hands”.)

The theme of defences against anxiety is analysed and discussed in section 4.7.2 below which discusses anxiety as a social emotion and the use of social defences.

4.5.5 Theme: Sensing the anxieties of others

Category 18 - The anxieties of others: (“Anybody who suffers with anxiety, generally, *they are not themselves are they?*”; “There were certain individuals at certain points in the process who just needed to know more than anyone else. And they needed to know more than anyone else because they were freaking out”; “I think they are probably anxious if they are uncertain about where the business is going”; “It is a family ... people would kind of bumble along and kind go about their daily stuff and then suddenly, you know, something small will happen and because of the background of stress inherent in their workplace, they might react more severely than they normally otherwise would”; “It’s almost like they let it take them over to the point where they then say, actually I just don’t know what to do about it. And they feel like every time they turnaround, they’re just staring at the same brick wall...”)

The theme of the EBOs *sense of others’ anxieties* is discussed in section 4.7 below as it falls under the discussion of anxiety as a social emotion.

4.5.6 Theme: Anxiety and entrepreneurial leadership

Category 19 - From the leader's perspective: ("I think it is important for leaders to really show interest and acknowledgement in the things that concern their staff"; "You've got to speak to them normally, to keep their anxiety levels down and their performance up"; "As the boss ... I keep my worries, and I try not to let them know what's happening within the organization ... I don't want to put them under worry for something that may never happen"; "That ability to stand aside ... I think that's the most difficult thing about running a family business is that the difficulty of wearing multiple hats, and I think it takes a particular type of person to be able to do that".)

Category 20 - From the follower's perspective: ("His style of management isn't supportive. It isn't a kind of, let's do this together, let's see what we can do ... It's—well, get it done. I don't care how. That's your problem"; "I suppose, well, from an anxiety point of view, people tread on eggshells around him")

The theme of anxiety *and entrepreneurial leadership* is also analysed and discussed in section 4.7 below.

4.5.7 Theme: Positive and negative aspects of anxiety

Category 21- Anxiety demotivates and motivate:

Words that illustrate how anxiety demotivates the EBOs include ("It's about losing interest in the world and things in the world. Not wanting to see or be with people"; "If I do get bad anxiety, I just go in myself, don't want to talk to nobody and I just go quiet. After one or two days and then I snap out and go back to normal again"; "I am a fairly cautious person ... my anxiety about the future of the organization will cause me not to take risks".)

Words that illustrate how anxiety motivates the EBOs include ("I kind of need a certain degree of stress just to keep me going"; "I like excitement and edge"; "I need a certain degree of stress just to keep me going"; "If you are not anxious, you don't suffer with it, and you're not bothered and get flippant. You are probably not giving them a service they deserve"; "For me, anxiety produces a form of adrenalin.

And if you haven't got the adrenalin, there is nothing at the other end worth doing. Along with anxiety comes a buzz"; "In a business sense, an anxious feeling, an anxious response might be your intuition saying something needs changing"; "The pressures that induce anxiety ... are potentially very good stimuli for re-evaluation and making changes to strategy".)

The theme of *the positive and negative effects of anxiety* is analysed and discussed in more detail in section 4.9 below.

4.5.8 Theme: The nature of anxieties for SMEs

Category 22 – The benefits and detriments of being small: ("SMEs are like families and as people get to know each other and be known by other people, I think that, that is the power of the SME ... you can open up about stuff that is going on in your life that you are worried about and people will support you ... The flip side of that is that, it's quite a brutal place to work. So, there aren't many punches pulled. If you think about something, you just come out and say it"; "I suppose as a business we don't like people who get stressed because it has an impact on everyone else. I mean we're only a small business, so it avoids the politics bit".)

Category 23- The tensions of partnerships: ("I think that is a stress and linked into that is the whole area around partnerships. Because, I mean, partnerships are with the suppliers and with distributors, the organizations you need to work with. If they don't perform, if they don't work well, then that has a direct impact on your ability to trade and also on your ability to raise more money in the future"; "Frequently, we are in a situation where the partners or the customers we are working with have unrealistic, in our opinion, views as to what could be achieved and when. But as a small organization and with the need to grow and manage the business, there is, I guess, a certain amount of pressure to deliver on timescales even if we believe they are unrealistic".)

Category 24 – A sense of urgency: ("There's no respite [in family businesses]"; "I switch off the lights when the sun is shining because I don't want to spend the extra pound on having the lights on ... it all matters, you know, and if it takes a big corporate a week rather than a day to respond on a decision, then that matters. It

will affect your eventual outcome. So, there is that sense of urgency around stuff”; “People are anxious about the delivery of the projects, revenue towards our business ... people always have a certain level of anxiety around the things that they are delivering. Can they deliver on time and will they get the impact that is expected?”)

Category 25 – Financial worries and uncertainties: (“If you are not paying yourself, that’s money that you can sort of pay somebody else, and we have an overdraft as well. We’ve lived in an overdraft for quite a long time”; “We are going to put everything into this and try and get through it”; “There was a time when we just didn’t have the projects coming in or the projects that were coming in were very high risk, low reward projects. And that was very definitely an anxiety-inducing environment”.)

Category 26 - Anxiety and making decisions: (“I think it [anxiety] could force us to make quick decisions sometimes that aren’t necessarily the right ones. So, without the pressure, I mean there’s certain things that I know I’ve done that, in the middle of the night when you’re thinking about it, you think actually, did I do the right thing there? Perhaps I didn’t, you know. If I’d waited a bit longer”.

From the analysis of the categories, nine themes were generated from the data and illustrated above. A further level of analysis was conducted, and the themes were then distinguished into the relational levels at organizational (macro), social (meso) and personal (micro) levels. The themes relating to the personal perceptions/explanations, feelings of anxiety and physical symptoms are attributed to the micro level. The positive and negative aspects of the EBOs experiences of anxiety is also attributed to the micro level at this phase of the study. The themes relating to social and relational aspects of anxiety are associated with worries about business partnerships, family, staff and colleagues. The themes and issues that had an overall organizational context, such as financial worries about the business, the size of the organization, the business sector, external factors etc were considered as macro level themes. These are presented in Table 4.6 below showing the nine themes and how they were related to the three relational levels.

Themes	Relational
1. Meanings given to anxiety	Organizational (Macro), Social (Meso) & Personal (Micro)
2. The nature of anxieties for SMEs	Organizational (Collective nature of anxiety)- Macro
3. Experiences of anxiety	Social- Meso (Anxiety as a social/group emotion)
4. Causes of anxiety for SME entrepreneurs	
5. Entrepreneurs' defences against anxiety	
6. Anxiety and entrepreneurial leadership	
7. Entrepreneurs' sense of others' anxieties (when other people are anxious)	
8. The personal challenges of anxiety for entrepreneurs (feeling very responsible; anxiety has a high price)	Personal- Micro The personal feelings and contradictions associated with anxiety
9. Anxiety and excitement: the positive and negative effects of anxiety	

Table 4.6 Multi-level dimensions of anxiety for the SME entrepreneurs and business owners

The key themes and their relational levels are analysed and discussed in the following sections, with selected vignettes to illustrate the richness of the data from participants' own words as required in qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The themes are analysed and discussed in accordance with the relational headings of organizational, social and personal anxiety, respectively, from sections 4.6–4.8 below.

4.6 Organizational—Macro (Collective Nature of Anxiety)

The theme of the *nature of anxieties for SMEs* has a collective nature because it can be applied to all SMEs in general. Indeed, many of the anxieties experienced by the

EBOs were often due to the fact that their organizations were SMEs and caused by external factors such as the economy, suppliers, customers etc.

As illustrated in 4.5.8 above, EBOs shared that there was a benefit and detriment of being small. Participant EBOs also shared how external customer and partnership relations could be anxiety inducing. The constant sense of urgency in these SMEs were also shared as part of the experiences for SME EBOs which caused anxiety.

Central among the organizational dynamics of anxiety for the EBOs are financial worries and uncertainties ('it's cash, cash is the key'; '95 percent is money'; 'it comes down to money at the end of the day'). The following vignette illustrates the worries and anxieties linked to the nature of the business from participants own words:

Participant 1 (P1) stated: "So, we are an outsourced HR company and our role is to find other individuals and organizations, mostly organizations who require help and support on any range of HR matters, but also we do a certain amount of organizational development. And it's all about contracts coming in, it's all about keeping an eye on the cash flow and anxiety, such as there is, is around maintaining that balance between the periods of time when we're very busy and the periods of time when we're less busy and the money isn't coming in. So, it's money". Participant 1 shows how the worries about finances created anxieties.

Also, Participant 5 (P5) illustrates how for a well-established family business, pressures from senior partners/ family members and finances created anxieties stating "We've got to make sure that we produce the turnover we need to keep our staff employed. All those are forms of anxiety that come from the top and filter down..."

Participant 6 (P6) also discussed how the economy, suppliers and cash flow created anxieties for SME stating: "The recession has not helped. The other big thing would be money and turnover. The bigger the organizations that we work for, I can't really say their names, 80% of our work is Council work which they always pay on the month. But then, other big organizations, big names, their payment terms can be up to three months and sometimes you got to fight them for that. So, cash flow is one of our biggest problems". For P6, the recession and late payments by other organizations created financial worries and anxiety.

Participant 9 (P9) like P6 indicated that the impact of economic factors created anxieties. P 9 stated:

Well, I think the state of the economy makes me very anxious. Obviously, the nature of running a business is that you need to be providing an income for yourself and doing the best you can for your customers and so on. But ultimately you can't do it for nothing and there is, particularly in the current economic climate, there's a ...probably in the 13 years I've been running my own business, there's probably the greatest ever expectation of getting something for nothing, almost. Or at relatively trivial cost. And certainly, I find there's an increasing challenge in getting very small businesses to understand what the true cost of specialist help is. For example, some of them might expect to pay £20 or £30 an hour for specialist help and that's—you can't run a properly funded business for that sort of price.

Interviewer: So how does that make you anxious?

P9 answered:

... It makes me anxious from the point of view of I worry about the potential of those businesses. It makes me anxious from the point of view of feeling unsure about the future of my own business. You know no business can survive without income of some description, and I think that that makes you quite reflective in terms of, well, how things are, what is the true nature of the world at this point in time, what has caused it to get here and where is it likely to go in the future. And you know if those three things generate an anxious response, then maybe that's—you know, you ought to go and do something else!" [Laughs]

P9 is a business to business SME EBO. P9 reveals how the economic climate and worries about finances created anxieties for the business and discussed the possibility of the business not surviving and its consequences.

Participant 11 (P11) also reveals how the financial worries caused by the external economic factors had a direct impact on the SME, leading to staff being made redundant stating:

Well, I just think it's, at the moment it is based on the economy, isn't it? So, we've been sort of just about making ends meet. But it is still a real worry whether or not we can continue and pay everybody. I think our employees know about that; we are very honest because we don't keep anything from them. So, I think that they are probably anxious as well because they don't know how long that they will have a job. Umm, we did have a guy called [name withheld]; before April, we had to let Lee go, which was a really, really painful thing to do because when somebody does a good job and you get on with them, there is no reason other than you haven't got the money to pay them, umm, it's really, really difficult to do that.

In addition to financial worries and uncertainties, the SME EBOs shared how the deadlines, missed opportunities caused anxiety and how anxiety affected their decision making.

Participant 7 (P7) indicated the strong senses of urgency in the business which created anxieties: "I guess we're a quite deadline-driven business, so at the employee level, things have to be done by a certain time, and then there are either events that require the things that we do for a launch, or there are certain deadlines that can't be missed. And that provides plenty of stress for the people, those people at that level".

Participant 8 (P8) discussed how missed/failed business opportunities caused anxieties for SMES stating "Well, during that period of time we didn't—we were working on a number of opportunities with potential clients and none of them, literally none of them happened. So that was very, very frustrating. So, there were three major things going on, so it wasn't like we weren't doing anything, and we were doing mailshots and contact management, trying to get other assignments. But those three major opportunities just didn't come off".

Both P7 and P8 indicate how deadlines and missed business opportunities can impact on the SMEs survival and thereby cause anxieties.

According to Participant 12 (P12) "anxiety causes us to change the way that we make decisions....and actually to make bad and some less good decisions". Another participant, P4 also explained how physical tiredness and anxiety impact on making

decisions stating “ So it’s a combination of tiredness and anxiousness that sometimes impact on the way decisions are made. And I know that sometimes, I can get this combination of anxiety, tiredness, and stress if you would, even a relatively simple decision, you have an email in front of you, I just can’t make this decision literally”.

The following vignette from P1, as the co-owner of the SME, provides an example of the impact of anxiety on decision making:

(My husband and co-owner) made a decision to move from a barn that we were renting, which wasn’t a premises that you could take customers to, just a storage facility really. He made a decision to rent a proper unit, it’s like this heavenly unit with heating, light and all sorts and it’s quite smart. So, you can actually bring customers. Now I thought that it was a really bad decision because you sign up for 5 years, I thought oh my God that is the fastest way to put money down the plughole. But actually, people have seen us and come and knocked at the door. This one guy who came in off the street ended up being our best customer ever and spent about £45,000, just kept spending money with us... So, I think that the decision to get the unit, I don’t know whether it will prove to be a good decision in 5 years’ time but it has brought in that type of customer that thinks they’ve got a unit and so they are here to stay rather than working out of your house or your barn.

At the time that the decision is made, Participant 11 worries about what she thinks might be “a really bad decision” to rent a unit for the business. However, she also feels that it is a “proper unit” for the business, that it is “heavenly” and “smart”. She does not know “whether it will prove to be a good decision ...” but she knows that the change has made the business more visible and that it has brought in customers.

This narrative suggests to us that the experience of anxiety in SMEs is characterized by both specific moments of heightened anxiety that are integral to risk taking and decision making in small businesses and an underlying feeling of anxiety that quite possibly never goes away. The understanding from the data is that anxiety is in the background at challenging or difficult times, but it is also an integral and everyday part

of being an SME entrepreneur. This also illustrates the paradoxical tensions and contradictions of anxiety.

4.7 Social—Meso (Anxiety as a Social Emotion)

In this section, the themes of *experiences of anxiety by SME EBOs*, *causes of anxiety for SME EBOs*, *EBOs defences against anxiety*, *EBOs senses of other's anxieties*, *anxiety and entrepreneurial leadership* are discussed as they fall under the social/meso relational levels. As illustrated in section 4.5 above, from the phase two data collection and analysis, the categories and words used to explain the experiences and causes of anxiety were mainly attributed by the participant EBOs to social factors and issues external to themselves.

4.7.1 Experiences and causes of anxiety for SME EBOs

For the SME EBOs the experiences of anxiety included both physical and emotional manifestations. The physical experiences of anxiety included lack of sleep and emotional experiences such as “*worry*”, “*concern*”, “*feeling stuck*” and “*sadness that things are.... not as they should be*” reveal that anxiety is both personal and social as an experience. Such experiences were often caused by social factors. The theme of causes of anxiety for the SME EBOs included money, winning work and contracts with clients, dealing with risks, anxieties about staff performance, client relationships and the external environment. All these examples reveal the impact of social and relational issues and how these can cause anxiety for the SME EBO.

4.7.2 Anxiety as a social emotion and social defences against anxiety

The main causes of anxiety for the entrepreneurs in this study were money, risk and dealing with clients, customers, peers, colleagues and employees. One way to understand anxiety as a social emotion is by identifying the social defences against anxiety that endeavour to keep it at bay. Responses to these pressures provide insights into defences against anxiety.

The EBO interviews revealed a variety of different individual defences. These included: attempts to rationalize away anxiety; attempts to protect staff from anxiety through “clever camouflage”; through wearing a “professional mask all the time”; by splitting emotions between work and family (“I don’t talk much about it to people at work”); and through gendered justifications (“I don’t think men generally are terribly good at that”). These responses become enacted through authority relations and start to characterize and then define behaviour. For the SME EBOs anxiety was primarily perceived as a danger to survival, a threat to the functioning of the enterprise and required social defence mechanisms and systems.

4.7.3 EBOs sense of others anxieties/ Anxiety and entrepreneurial leadership

For the SME entrepreneur, it is an everyday experience to be worried and concerned about staff and the organization as the entrepreneurial leader, but this worry tends to be hidden. Also, the findings show attempts to make anxiety a problem associated with others (not me). However, from the perspective of a manager appointed to run the business as an entrepreneur on behalf of the founding owner, leadership of the organization is a source of worry and anxiety reveals tensions. The following vignettes provide a deeper illustration of these dynamics in a small, manufacturing business. To illustrate, Participant 10 (P10) who is the General Manager employed as an entrepreneur to run the SME states:

Our Sales Manager has had a customer he has been dealing with for quite some time, one of our big customers... Our owner and Managing Director then decided to talk to this customer without dealing with our Sales Manager and undercut what he’d already agreed. How can I voice my opinion to the owner of the business that this isn’t right, this isn’t acceptable? Our Sales Manager feels really anxious now because he doesn’t know where he stands. Also, the other people working under the Sales Manager know what happened, and now that line of management has been weakened.

P 10 seems to be caught in the dilemma of not being able to voice his authority and opinion in his role, either with the owner or with the sales manager. The owner causes anxiety through his independent behaviour; the sales manager suffers from anxiety

because “he doesn't know where he stands”. What seems like a narrative describing behaviour above and below the General Manager can also be seen as a tale of how anxiety undermines the ability to communicate within the enterprise. It seems such patterns of anxiety about speaking out are established practice within this enterprise; they are a social defence against the potential power or disruptiveness of the collective voice in the face of individual ownership. The narrative helps to comprehend that, even after an enterprise has grown (to the extent that it employs a General Manager, a Sales Manager and a sales team), the owner continues to assume independence that is characteristic of a start-up, to consider the enterprise as his “baby” (Cardon et al., 2005). This reflects the ongoing difficulty, at least emotionally, of getting beyond the idea that ownership of the enterprise resides in one individual. While this may be true legally and financially, it can undermine a collective sense of ownership in the enterprise that is important for its ability to thrive. In other words, anxiety as a social emotion holds communities together in ways that may undermine the ability to grow the enterprise. This is because anxieties that might support growth are restricted by social defences or by fears about the consequences of such emotions coming to the surface. P10's vignette also reflects how emotions reflect both feelings about the owner and broader questions of ownership/leadership.

Some of the SME entrepreneurs from the interviews indicated an awareness of other's anxiety. P3 stated: “Anybody who suffers with anxiety, generally, *they are not themselves are they?*” P3 carried on stating “there were certain individuals at certain points in the process who just needed to know more than anyone else”. This shows an awareness and concern for the anxieties of staff. This is perhaps in contrast to the owner in P10's organization who does not seem to show an awareness.

4.8 Personal—Micro (The Personal Feelings and Contradictions Associated with Anxiety)

In this section, the personal challenges for the SME EBOs are discussed with an analysis of the positive and negative effects of anxiety. The theme of anxiety *and excitement: positive and negative* effects of anxiety is considered here as a personal-micro level emotion because the categories and words by participant EBOs as illustrated in section 4.5.7 were often individual and personal.

4.8.1 Personal challenges associated with anxiety for SME EBOs

There were various personal responses to anxiety (e.g., “keeping things to my chest”, “not wanting to see or be with people”, “can’t speak, hot hands”, “I’ll sort of cave in”, etc.). The understanding from the data is that anxiety is behind moments of intense personal feelings at challenging or difficult times. P8 stated “Yes I analyse everything too much. That’s me. That’s just what I do. So yes, some of it just completely does your head in.” This statement was made in the context of explaining the physical consequences of anxiety and worry.

Participant 2 (P2) also explained how anxiety caused procrastination stating “There’s the bit where you initially notice, oh god that’s why I’m procrastinating, I’m anxious, I’m putting it off like I’m putting off.....because I’ve got two of them for the same organisation to do and it’s like oh!” P1 like P2 shared the physical challenges of anxiety stating “I think there are physical symptoms and the times when I have been anxious, I don’t sleep well, I don’t eat well. Um, - I speak quickly, get short-tempered, become a bit manic.” P6 also stated; “If I do get bad anxiety, I just go in myself, I don’t want to talk to nobody, and I just go quiet. After one or two days and then I snap out and go back to normal again”. The EBO participants reveal how anxiety created personal and physical consequences and manifest at the personal level.

In addition, the EBOs also shared their feelings of personal responsibility when running an entrepreneurial SME and the personal expectations that are self-imposed as the owner/leader of the SME. As stated earlier, the EBO would even consider the enterprise as a “baby” (Cardon et al., 2005) or like a child that they “feel very responsible ...for” and often anxious about. Such feelings of anxieties had negative and positive effects.

4.8.2 Anxiety and excitement: The positive and negative effects of anxiety

The findings reveal that the experiences of entrepreneurship and anxiety does have positive and negative effects for the SME entrepreneurs. Although, anxiety is defined as ‘the expectation of a danger’ (Salecl, 2004) and it would be easy to imagine that this only implies that something bad is about to happen. The danger here is not simple because the emotional risks involved in entrepreneurship can excite as much as they

undermine. There are positive and negatives effects of anxiety in entrepreneurship.

Participant 3's (P3) vignette below provides a narrative example of these dynamics.

We got to Christmas last year and we had like eight hours of cash left. The question was: are we going to be able to make payroll for Christmas? Can you imagine failing to pay payroll at Christmas? And you know at 5 pm on Friday 21st everyone is going off on their Christmas and New Year. If you don't have the finance thing in place by 5 pm on Friday 21st, you are unlikely to make payroll, and no one is coming back after Christmas. The phone rang at 5 pm and we put in place the financing that we needed, and we did the deal ... I put down that phone and I thought, this is it, I'm going to now be sick for three days, and I had been at my wits end for months, and the last couple of weeks had been beyond 10 on the stress scale. I put the phone down, and I felt like three days I couldn't get out of bed because I felt so sick ... Your body knows the situation is over, then you just become ill for however long it takes your body to get over it.

P3's description of the situation is common for SMEs. P3 provided personal and physical responses to the situation, showing the potential of positive and negative outcomes of anxiety for SMEs. The positive outcome is the excitement of finding a solution and the negative outcome is the mental and physical sickness linked to the anxiety over securing staff wages. Participant 4 (P4) also reveals how anxiety impacts on SME entrepreneurs and their decisions in negative and positive ways by stating:

I am a fairly cautious person; I like everything planned out. So, in this situation, my anxiety about the future of the organisation will cause me not to take risks in terms of saying right, we who should recruit more people because when we get funding, we are going to need them in place. Umm, as compared to other people in the organisation. Our CEO is less risk averse, therefore, would naturally be less anxious about things and therefore would be more inclined to make a decision".

P3 gladly shares the positive experiences of making a risky decision by stating:

We made a number of decisions last year when we were days away from being completely insolvent right. And we knew, it wasn't by accident, it wasn't by kind of like bad management. It was we took a decision that we were going to do something in November that meant that we were going to need more money by May. And when we got that money in May, that meant that we could get to December but in making those decisions, we were effectively putting all of our bets into certain bucket. So, we said we are going to bet that we should actually close these investors and if we can't then there really wasn't a plan B. And plan B is we all go home and that's it, its game over".

P3 confirmed that the risk paid off, providing a good example of the positive experiences of anxiety and impact on entrepreneurial decision making.

4.9 Comparing the Themes Between Phase One and Phase Two

The following Table 4.7 is a comparative table which shows the themes from phase one and phase two. Themes which are not shared are highlighted in bold.

Themes from Phase One	Themes from Phase Two
Meanings given to anxiety	Meanings given to anxiety
	Experiences of anxiety as SME EBOs
Causes of anxiety for SME entrepreneurs	Causes of anxiety for SME EBOs
Entrepreneur decision making and anxiety	
The personal challenges of anxiety for entrepreneurs	The personal challenges of anxiety for SME EBOs
	Entrepreneurs' sense of others' anxieties
	Anxiety and (entrepreneurial) leadership

Entrepreneurs' defences against anxiety	EBOs defences against anxiety
The nature of anxieties for SMEs	The nature of anxieties for SMEs
	Anxiety and excitement: The positive and negative effects of anxiety

Table 4.7 Comparisons between the phase one and phase two themes

The Phase one pilot data does not have specific themes on *the experiences of anxiety as SME EBOs, EBOs' sense of others anxiety, and Anxiety and excitement: The positive and negative effects of anxiety*. Whereas, these were evident in the phase two findings. The phase one data has a theme on *Entrepreneur decision making and anxiety* but this topic cuts across the themes from the phase two data collection and analysis. However, the comparative table shows that the themes from both phases of data collection were quite similar. This shows saturation and the fact that the SME entrepreneurs and business owners share comparable perspectives about anxiety in the entrepreneurial context. This makes the findings in Chapter 4 trustworthy, consistent, neutral and applicable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nobel & Smith, 2015 - see section 3.8 of the methodology chapter). It also provides the opportunity to make possible generalizations for a common case study (Yin, 1994) such as the one in this study. The fact that both sets of data were also analysed for conference papers and a journal article following rigorous discussions with experienced academic peers made it possible to reduce any personal bias.

4.10 Summary of the Chapter and Addressing the Research Questions

In summary, this chapter focused on the analysis and findings of the data collected from phase one (SME entrepreneur/business owner pilot focus group) and phase two (the SME entrepreneur one-to-one- semi-structured in-depth interviews). The findings and analysis address the three research questions and objectives of this study. The findings reveal the meanings, experiences and causes of anxiety, using the words of the participants. These are then illustrated from the macro (organizational), meso

(social) and micro (personal) levels. The findings indicate that anxiety forms an integral part of SME business. The findings also indicate that anxiety is cognitively and socially constructed (French & Vince, 1999; Vince & Broussine, 1996) and participants use social defence mechanism against anxiety. Finally, anxiety can be perceived in a positive and a negative way by the SME entrepreneurs with physical and emotional experiences linked to the anxieties. Table 4.8 below shows how the themes from the findings in this chapter address each of the research questions so far:

Research Questions	Themes that address the Research Questions from the Phases one and two data
RQ1. What is meant by the emotion of “anxiety” for SME entrepreneurs/business owners and staff in an entrepreneurial SME?	Meanings given to anxiety
RQ2. How are the feelings and experiences of “anxiety” interpreted by entrepreneurial SMEs?	Experiences of anxiety as SME EBOs Causes of anxiety for SME EBOs Entrepreneur decision making and anxiety.
RQ3. How is “anxiety” manifested at the different relational levels—namely micro (entrepreneur, personal, individual), meso (interpersonal, team, group) and macro (organizational)—within a case study medium-sized entrepreneurial SME?	Causes of anxiety for SME EBOs The personal challenges of anxiety for SME EBOs. Anxiety and (entrepreneurial) leadership. EBOs defences against anxiety The nature of anxieties for SMEs. Anxiety and excitement: The positive and negative effects of anxiety.

Table 4.8 How the phase one and two themes address the research questions

In the next chapter, the findings from the case study’s SME organization-phase three will be discussed and analysed.

CHAPTER 5:

FINDINGS: PART TWO- CASE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the analysis and findings of the data collected from one-on-one interviews with leaders, managers and staff from the entrepreneurial small and medium enterprise (SME) organization, staff-completed questionnaires and staff focus group. The background of the SME organization is provided in section 1.3.3 of Chapter 1. The analysis of the data and findings illustrated in this chapter are linked to the literature as discussed in Chapter 6. In section 5.2, an explanation is provided of how the phase three data was analysed using qualitative content analysis through the process of open coding, sorting the codes into categories and themes. The relational levels show how the themes fit into the personal, social/team/group and organizational levels. In section 5.3, the meanings and explanation of anxiety provided by participants are illustrated, showing evidence of personal, social and organizational level dimensions. In sections 5.4 and 5.5, the themes and categories linked to the organizational macro-level aspects of anxiety are illustrated. In section 5.6, the social-meso aspects of anxiety as a social emotion are discussed and the defences against anxiety are also illustrated. Section 5.7 covers the personal-micro feelings, and experiences of anxiety. Section 5.8 demonstrates the positive and negative effects of anxiety. Section 5.9 provides a summary and demonstrate how the research questions are addressed.

The participant codes for the phase three findings are provided in section 3.10 of Chapter 3. Codes are allocated to each participant for ease of reference throughout this chapter and for reasons of confidentiality and anonymity. This is in accordance with the research ethics considerations and guidelines as discussed in section 3.9 of Chapter 3.

The following Table 5.1 illustrates the structure of this chapter for ease of reference:

5.2: The phase three data collection and analysis
5.3: The meanings of anxiety for the participants showing personal, social and organizational dimensions. Key words also illustrated.
5.4: The nature of entrepreneurial SMEs
5.5: The cause of anxiety for the SME
5.6: The social-meso aspects of
5.7: Individual experiences and challenges of anxiety
5.8: The positive and negative effects of anxiety
5.9: Summary of the chapter and addressing the RQs

Table 5.1 Summary of the Chapter 5 structure

5.2 Phase Three- Case Study Data Collection and Analysis

From 2013-2018, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were held with the entrepreneurial SME staff at all levels from CEO to administrator to understand the impact of entrepreneurial anxiety at the individual, team and organisation levels and answer the research questions. The transcribed interviews and focus group data totalled approximately 200 pages and around 70,000 words. The one-on-one interviews allowed the researcher to ask in-depth questions and probe responses (Collis and Hussey, 2003) from participants. All interviews conducted for this research were semi-structured, using a questionnaire (Appendix D) as a guide to lead the interviews in desired directions.

However, questions that were not included in the questionnaire were also asked as the interviewer picked up on things said by the interviewees that required further elaboration. The interviewer acted as a guide, providing to the participants, areas to focus on, giving interviewees the opportunity to talk freely. In addition to the interviews, the questionnaire was completed anonymously by a group of staff who preferred not to be interviewed. The fourteen questionnaires were completed by members of staff who did not want to be interviewed and did not participate in the focus group. Another group of staff were interviewed via a focus group, using the questionnaire as a guide.

The analysis of data collected from the entrepreneurial SME case study organization also progressed through the list of stages prescribed for qualitative content analysis which involves codification, categorisation and the creation of themes from the categories (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005) in accordance with the prescribed steps for qualitative content analysis as follows:

1 The interview transcripts, completed questionnaires and focus group transcripts were analysed by reading all data repeatedly to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the whole.

2. All data were read word by word to derive codes manually by first highlighting the exact words from the text that appear to capture key thoughts or concepts. So, a broad process of open coding was used to identify key thoughts or concepts.

3. Each transcript and notes taken were read and highlighted to form first impressions, thoughts, and initial analysis. As this process continued, labels for codes were created that emerged from the data and were reflective of a key area of thought. Key words and phrases used by participants to define or describe anxiety within the various interview data were collated together. These words often came directly from the text and then became the initial open coding scheme. This first cycle (Saldana, 2013) of open coding allowed the researcher to understand how anxiety is often associated with other broad ranges of feelings and experiences. It was interesting that participants would refer to anxiety as “worry,” “concern,” “stress,” or “fear.” More often, some of the key words that were used by the participants from the interview data were “concern,” “worry,” and “stress.”

4. The open codes were then sorted into categories based on how different codes are related and linked. These emergent categories were used to organize and group codes into meaningful clusters (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Patton, 2002). The derived categories represented either the explicit communication or inferred communication, since the aim of qualitative content analysis is “to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314).

The goal for the use of the second cycle of data analysis is to identify the dominant codes in the data and use them to identify emerging categories from the different

participants' data. For example, participants were able to use physical and emotional words to explain their experiences of anxiety. So, on the whole, it made it possible for the researcher to identify various categories from those words within the data set. The next step was to analyse the range of categories based on the interpretation of the data and the words participants were using. From the data set, forty-one categories were identified for this phase of the study. These categories were also influenced by the data analysis conducted during phases one and two (see Chapter 4).

5. Definitions/themes for each category, subcategory, and code were then developed to prepare for reporting the findings. The exemplars for each code and category are identified from the data. The identified categories were then grouped into themes and a total of eleven themes were developed. The relational levels were then analysed to show where each theme fell in terms of the organizational (macro), social/group(meso) and personal (micro) levels. The themes identified from the entrepreneurial SME organisation interviews, the interviews with the staff focus and the completed staff questionnaires had similarities and differences with the themes from the SME EBOs from the phase one and two data analysis.

The process from open coding to the creation of themes can be explained by using the answers given by participants to the question on what anxiety meant for the SME organization. The answers provided resulted in the identification of key words used by the participants to explain anxiety. The key words identified were mainly "worry," "fear," "stress," "nervous", "desperate," etc. These words appeared in the data from the various interviews and focus group transcripts. The words were then categorised as *Definitions of anxiety* and given the theme *Meanings given to anxiety*. The full table of data structure that shows the forty-one categories and eleven themes is provided in Appendix (J).

When data sources such as interviews begin to provide the same information with no new data created, saturation occurs when no new categories or themes emerge in the analysis stage (Saunders et al., 2017). On this basis, it can be shown that both data saturation and qualitative analysis saturation were reached in this study, as illustrated in the data sources map provided in Appendix (I) and evidence of data analysis provided in Chapters 4 and 5. Similar to the SME entrepreneur/business

owners and focus groups findings as discussed in Chapter 4, anxiety had a multi-level dimension for the entrepreneurial case study SME. Thus, the identified themes could be perceived as organizational, social/group and personal level anxieties.

The following Table 5.2 shows how all the eleven themes from the findings are linked to the different relational levels. The organizational level, as previously discussed, pertains to the macro, collective, and organizational themes. The social level refers to the meso, team, group, and socially constructed themes. The personal level refers to the micro, individual, and personal aspects and effects of anxiety.

Themes	Levels
1. Meanings given to anxiety	Organizational, social and personal
2. Nature of anxiety in enterprises	Organizational (Collective)
3. Causes of Anxiety	Organizational and social
4. Anxiety is socially embedded 5. Communication of anxieties 6. Sense of Others' Anxieties 7. Anxiety caused by (entrepreneurial) leadership 8. Defences Against Anxiety	Social/Group (Anxiety as a social emotion)
9. Experiences of anxiety 10. The personal challenges of anxiety	Personal (The personal feelings and contradictions associated with anxiety)
11. The positive and negative effects of anxiety	Organizational, social and personal

Table 5.2 Multi-level dimensions of anxiety for the case study entrepreneurial SME

These eleven themes identified from the forty-one categories of the entrepreneurial SME data will now be discussed using quotes and vignettes where appropriate to illustrate the rich interpretations provided by the participants. The relational level for each theme is also shown in the headings in Table 5.3. First, the theme of the

meanings of anxiety given by the participants will be discussed, as this theme reveals personal, social and organizational level interpretations.

5.3 Meanings of Anxiety- Personal, Social and Organizational interpretations

In the interviews and focus group in the SME case study organization, participants used rich and varied definitions of anxiety. Like the findings from the SME entrepreneurs and business owners, definitions of anxiety had physical and emotional connotations. Especially in the phase three findings, the theme of the meanings of anxiety reveals personal, social, and organizational level interpretations of anxiety. This is illustrated by using the words of the participants as required in qualitative content analysis, as discussed in section 5.2 above. For the sake of anonymity, participant code names are provided. See Tables 3.8-3.10 in section 3.10.3 of Chapter 3 for the full lists. For example, **HDI** refers to a Head of Department. Using rich quotes from the participants, evidence of the personal, social, and organizational level interpretations of anxiety are respectively demonstrated in sections 5.3.1, 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 as follows:

5.3.1 Personal-micro level definitions of anxiety

Personal level anxiety refers to those anxieties manifested at the individual level pertaining to the individual's personal experiences and perceptions. Anxiety was defined by participants in the following ways:

HD1 stated "Anxiety to me is the feeling of worry, and I think in essence anxiety is about being out of control. Not being in control of the outcome of whatever circumstance is going on." Another department head, **HD2**, stated:

Well, I think it is very much about an expectation... it's about something that you are feeling that you have, a worry or concern or it's a fear that something's going to happen or something bad is going to happen, or something's not going to go the way you want it or you're going to be disappointed or whatever, but it's that, that's how I would describe anxiety, it's a fear.

Similarly, a senior manager, **SM2**, provided an emotional definition of anxiety, stating "Um, it's the feeling of uneasiness when you're worrying." A participant team member

from the staff focus group said, “stress is the same as anxiety.” However, another participant in the focus group disagreed, stating “I would put stress a little bit higher than anxiety.” Thus, indicating that stress was higher in intensity than anxiety.

A departmental manager **MA1**, gave a personal/cognitive definition of anxiety, stating: “To me, I think it's a state of your mind, where you create a number of scenarios in your head, a number of what if scenarios, and maybe rightly or wrongly, some of those then start to dominate your present form of thinking.”

A focus group member, **STF4**, provided a physical definition of anxiety, stating that it was a “concern about something that perhaps raises your heart rate, or makes you feel uneasy about something.” A staff member, **IT1**, described anxiety using physical reactions such as “hot and cold sweats, panic attacks due to their personal experiences of it.”

These personal definitions of anxiety show how varied and complex the definitions of anxiety are in the context of entrepreneurial SMEs. Participants used cognitive, emotional and physical definitions of anxiety to provide their own interpretations of anxiety.

5.3.2 Social-meso level definitions of anxiety

Some participants defined anxiety as stress and made strong links to the impact of work induced anxiety in their definitions. For example, a department head, **HD3**, stated: Anxiety as opposed to stress, and stress being more extreme form of anxiety, I guess? I guess it's around the ability to handle the work that we're asked to do. So, that's either the type of work, our readiness to deal with that type of work, and probably more, I think for [organization name] is the volume of work and the pace at which that work is expected to be processed.”

A senior manager, **SM1**, described anxiety as “Stress and foreboding. It's the pressure that you put on yourself or feel that is put upon you, to do or achieve the target.”

On the other hand, an administrator, **AD1** indicated: “I would think it's when you are worried about something in the workplace, whether that be worrying about the job that

you're doing or worrying about maybe things that have been said in the workplace...making you feel anxious and you don't sleep."

5.3.3 Organizational-macro level definitions of anxiety

The leading SME entrepreneur in the organization, **CE1** defined anxiety as follows: "Umm, anxiety, I guess it's just that fear of the unknown, you are not sure what will happen." **CO1**, who is also a leading entrepreneur, defined anxiety somewhat similarly, stating: "Anxiety is concern, worry about events, either could be future events, it could be current events and for some people it could be past events. For me personally, I would say it is primarily about current and future. So, lack of certainty and lack of understanding about what might happen and concern about the impact that it would have on me personally, the company or widely."

A head of department, **HD1**, shared that company audits were a source of "anxiousness" for the organization, stating: "Anxiousness probably a couple of examples; one of them is where we've had audits in some of our overseas companies. Where we've presented the information knowing that there are some challenges in the way that the accounting had actually been undertaken and, therefore, the outcome of that could have been very detrimental to our organisation."

These explanations and interpretations show that the leaders and senior members of the organization tended to provide social and organizational level definitions of anxiety, whilst staff members tended to provide a more personal definition of anxiety. However, an administrator, **AD1**, also provided a social/workplace definition for anxiety, as indicated above.

5.3.4 Key words for anxiety

Key words that were used by the participants from the semi-structured interviews and focus group in the SME organization were often "concern," "worry," "fear," "stress," and "uncertainty." As this study adopts an interpretivist and social constructionist philosophy, the participants' own interpretations and meanings of the word anxiety are acknowledged even if they are personally and/or socially constructed. The findings show that key emotion words such as worry, fear, stress, and anxiety were used interchangeably by the participants to explain anxiety. As discussed in Chapter 2, this

is consistent with past research finding that fear and anxiety specifically are often used interchangeably (Caciotti and Hayton, 2015).

The participants who completed the questionnaire anonymously did not give additional definitions for anxiety. All the staff respondents that completed the questionnaire agreed with the provided definition in the questionnaire (Appendix D) that defined anxiety as a “feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.” This is based on the definition provided and discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.3.4 and the literature review in Chapter 2, section 2.4. The theme of the nature of anxiety in SMEs is discussed in the next section.

5.4 Nature of the Entrepreneurial SMEs- Organizational Level Anxieties

As in phases one and two, it was found in phase three that anxiety emanates from the organisational experience itself. Specifically, the following categories were shared by the participants to illustrate the factors relevant to the theme titled the ***nature of the SME*** as an entrepreneurial organisation. The following categories (see Appendix J) as derived from the open codes were perceived by the participants to have an impact on the experiences of anxiety at all staff levels within the organisation:

- Anxiety is an everyday experience
- Volatile nature of an entrepreneurial SME
- A sense of urgency
- Workload pressures
- Financial worries and uncertainties
- Restructure of the organisation
- Size of the SME
- Anxieties about partnerships, joint ventures and investors

The case study SME organisation as described in Chapter 1 section 1.3.3 is a fast-growing, innovative organization that has its headquarters in the UK but has offices in ten countries worldwide at the time of writing. At the start of the longitudinal study, the organization had just four million micro-insurance customers who were mainly located in developing countries namely Bangladesh, the Philippines, Pakistan, Nigeria and

Ghana. By the end of the longitudinal study, the number of customers had grown to around forty-five million in about ten developing countries including India. Staff numbers were also increasing rapidly as the organization entered new markets. For example, the head office staff numbers saw a sharp increase from about thirteen to thirty-five members of staff during the period of the study. In addition to the interviews and completed questionnaires, this made it possible to conduct a focus group of staff members who later joined the organization and collect completed questionnaires of staff who did not want to be interviewed.

Therefore, because of the entrepreneurial nature of this enterprise, staff members at all levels within the organization experienced anxieties daily. The following subsections focuses on the categories that illustrate this theme of the *nature of the SME*. Some of the categories listed above will be joined together and relevant statements by participants from all levels of the organization are provided as evidence to illustrate the categories:

5.4.1 Anxiety as an everyday experience for entrepreneurial SME organisation

What the findings show is that anxiety is an everyday experience which is linked to job role, the type of work, workload, and the type of enterprise in which the participants are working. One of the heads of departments, **HD3**, commented that “It never goes away. Anxiety is there every day. It’s part of the experience of an entrepreneurial SME.”

This view seems to be supported at the various levels and in the responses given by participants, whether it was from the focus group, the one-on-one interviews or the feedback meetings had with some of the participants. This view that anxiety was a common, everyday experience in the context of an entrepreneurial SME was shared.

Another category that was common within the data set was participants talking about the business overall when explaining anxieties, often saying stating “This is expected in an SME”; “This is normal for a small business”; “This is normal for a growing small business”; “It goes with the territory of a small organisation”; “It goes with the territory

of an organisation that's trying to expand and grow"; "It's the nature of a small to medium enterprise." The following statement from **AD1** provides an example:

I would say that anybody, if they work for an organisation that they know is profit making and doing really, really well, and they have job security forever, I would say that it does relieve anxiety, stress, and pressure. But, if you're working at any job that has any uncertainty of course it's only normal, I think to have those, and you know anxiety and little bit of worry.

So, **AD1** was alluding to the fact that the nature of the enterprise, due to its uncertainties, created anxieties. **HD3** in the following vignette reveals the pressures that an SME has in dealing with his partners/clients and the resultant anxieties:

I mean I think you know people will say the clients, customers are always right, I guess. But for us, it's subtly different. Cos, we're primarily a business to business, to consumer player, so it's the business partners that we work with. I think part of the challenge is, we don't necessarily have clear rules of engagement agreed with those partners. So, it's quite easy for us to get embroiled into work that we might otherwise not get involved with. So, a larger, you know a larger organisation would say, "Well this is what we're going to do and nothing more." Whereas, as an SME, there's an element of, 'well we do need to do it cos we want to be seen to be doing the right thing, and if we don't do it, they'll just go somewhere else. There's an element of, I don't know whether running scared is the right word, but it's a fear of losing that business if we, if we don't do the right things.

These responses were categorised as responses linked to the nature of the enterprise and the fact that it is an SME. Due to the nature of the enterprise, anxiety was experienced at all levels of the organization. As one staff member (**STF4**) from the focus group stated, "It's just the nature of the game really, isn't it?" Another participant, a staff member from the focus group (**STF2**), also illustrates this by stating "cos it's an SME, it's a small organisation you may think about it more than if it was a larger organisation. So, you go home thinking about the business itself rather than just your job.

5.4.2 Volatile nature of entrepreneurial SME and restructuring of the organization

Another category which was very clear from the findings was the issue of the restructuring that has taken place because of growth and expansion within the UK and overseas. Members of staff saw redundancies occur because of these changes and the restructuring. Again, respondents at the staff member level, manager level, and heads of departments levels were all affected by this restructuring. The consequences were feelings of anxiety as well as fears about redundancies. For instance, one manager made it clear that his role was at risk because he felt his role was easily dispensable by the senior management team. So, he felt that for him, his current anxiety was the concern that he may be made redundant. In fact, that was what had happened when the researcher revisited the organization for second interviews.

However, a manager, **MA1**, shared that because of his role, he had prior knowledge of the restructuring and so he knew who was going to be made redundant and who wasn't. So, he wasn't worried at all. In fact, he saw the necessity for the restructuring and the changes. The following vignette illustrates **MA1**'s viewpoint about the restructuring:

So, obviously we've restructured the [name] team in the last kind of two or three months. Did that cause me worry? Honestly, I don't think it did. I think I was in a position where I was able to find out relatively quickly how safe my personal role was. Obviously, we care about our team but there is an aim where this is a business, this is work and so for me personally, I guess I was in a position where I was happy that things were secure for me. I think it was, as we touched on already, because you see all the information, you know the context behind the restructureYou carry on and so I think having seen a bit more of the background behind it and then the reasons for us needing to restructure, you know, it became clear that, actually the set-up that we currently have is suitable.

However, a senior manager accepted the changes as inevitable but shared the challenges this caused. **SM2** stated the following in relation to the redundancies and their impact on the team:

Well, I do understand what the rationale was and why the executive committee had to make that decision, So, probably it helped that I know why they have to do it , and what lies ahead. So, it's also accepting the fact that there's no perfect world.... So, to me, when I felt uneasy about it, knowing that I will be two people down with the same deadlines and the same amount of work. The first thing to do is to worry about it and then afterwards you know, it has to be done anyway and you know you still have time..... Yes, it will be difficult but involving the entire team across the globe helped because I did tell them that, yes, we are two people down, but also reassuring them that we can do it...

This shows **SM2's** attitude towards the situation and like **MA1** had prior knowledge, but saw the difficulties attached to the situation and provided a defence mechanism towards it.

HD3 also felt that the restructuring brought more pressure, as there was more demand on the members, which was frustrating and anxiety inducing. **HD3** indicated that he had asked the executive team to alleviate the problem. On the other hand, there was another head of department, **HD1**, who stated that the restructuring was inevitable and part of the nature of an entrepreneurial SME. **HD1** actually even went as far as stating that he only gives eighteen months in terms of the life and financial span for any start-up entrepreneurial SME. So, because he has that mentality due to his finance background, he therefore was not so anxious about the situation.

These statements indicated the contradictions and tensions from the perspectives of different department heads and managers in relation to this issue of restructuring and the volatile nature of an entrepreneurial SME. The staff focus group also revealed contradictions about this point. Some members of the focus group saw it as an inevitable process and accepted it, whereas others said it caused them worry and concern.

5.4.3 The SME's size caused anxiety

Most participants also alluded to the fact that the size of the SME, in this case a medium-sized business (as explained in Section 1.3.1 of Chapter 1), caused anxiety. Often comparisons were made with larger organizations to reveal the challenges created by the size of the SME. For example, **T1** alluded to the fact the recent restructuring and redundancies had a bigger impact and caused more anxieties due to the relatively small size of the organization. Stating that the impact may not have been so severe if it was a larger organization, **CE1** talked about the size of the SME and the feeling of being like a family and not having anywhere to hide:

I think employees in businesses are fairly intuitive. They know, especially in an SME, when things are going well and when things are not going well. And it's not possible to really kind of hide that. In big companies, if something is going badly, a very small number of people might know that things are going badly but, in an SME, you can't hide stuff. It's more like a family and if one department is in trouble then everyone knows it, and everyone has to carry the can a bit.

CO1 also stated how the size impacted on resources, stating:

The whole sort of balancing of resource is more challenging in an SME. I've worked in both SMEs and large organisations. In a large organisation, there is much more opportunity, if you are stretched, there is more opportunity to go and find somewhere else in the business to help out for a short period of time. In an SME, you've either got to deliver it with the people you've got, or you go out and invest in additional people.

HD1 also talked about the resourcing constraints due to the size of the SME:

Yeah, I think as a small business, we have small functions and therefore we're reliant on a small number of people. The dependence on those human resources is pretty key. So, there's a level of, not necessarily anxiety but potential anxiety if you know that those individuals are looking to move on, or

there are situations where they're not working for medical reasons or things like that, which then has a shortfall in our resource capabilities within my own function.

HD2 provided another dimension by indicating that the size created different agendas:

In an SME, certainly one like this, there are a lot of challenges with people having different agendas, maybe not having fully bottomed out roles and responsibilities, people stepping on each other's toes, people not taking responsibility for things, therefore falling down... A small business has the potential for a lot of in-fighting and I don't mean that that happens a lot, but I think it's worse in a smaller business than it would be in a big commercial business because there's a lot of resources available in big commercial businesses and there isn't here. So, we're all under an awful lot of pressure to get the job done, and when you're under pressure then that's when the relationships suffer....

According to **HD3**, due to its size, certain key functions which are required in an organization were lacking:

I think it, it's the fact that it's a growing business that doesn't necessarily have all the roles and functions in place that a larger organisation would. So, you know, in other organisations you might have an internal communications function, well they'll make sure that things get communicated and presented in a way. But you know in an SME, typically you don't necessarily have that role being fulfilled.

AD1 made a comparison between the current medium-sized organization and the previous micro SME she worked for, stating "I can see the differences here [referring to the case study SME]. Here, there's a chain of people where you need to go for approval and speak to, and that causes sometimes a bit of confusion. Yeah, and probably anxiety... before I had one boss, that was it."

STF2 stated that staff would have more concern for the organization because it was an SME: “It’s interesting to know that cos it’s an SME it’s a small organisation you may think about it more than if it was a larger organisation. So, you go home thinking about the business itself rather than just your job.” So, for **STF2**, the size of the SME meant having more concern about the business and in a way, this is similar to the **CE1**’s view that the SME is like a family and you can’t hide from it.

5.4 4 A sense of urgency for the SME and workload pressures

CE1 discussed how there was always a sense of urgency and pressure which created anxieties at all levels

So, you are looking for your partners to actually deliver. And I think, when you are dealing with large corporations, their idea of urgency is somewhat different because they don’t have a 15-month mind-set. They have 15 years, 15 decades, who cares. I mean, when I worked in a big company, I had no idea; I absolutely had no idea what my cost or my revenue had as an effect on the business.... it all matters, you know, and if it takes a big corporation a week rather than a day to respond on a decision, then that matters. It will affect your eventual outcome. So, there is that sense of urgency around stuff.

SC1 alluded to the workload pressure and its impact on staff in the organization by stating: “I think there’s a lot of pressure in there, because it’s all, it’s all target driven. Let’s be honest, there’s no spare fat here. if somebody goes off sick, it has an impact on you, the software developers and the teams.”

STF4 also commented on the workload in comparison with a larger organization, stating: It’s worse in a small [company]. I’ve worked for large companies as well and, there is more to share the workload in a large company, so whereas, here it’s all concentrated on very few people”. **AD1** also stated “I did feel under pressure with the workload that I was given on top of the work I was already doing. It was a bit much.”

SM1 discussed the challenges created if someone is off sick for a long time at a SME, stating:

We have very little contingency to allow for someone being off sick long-term. You know, things that in a larger company might, you might just have cover for people, and we haven't. That succession planning isn't really there. So, people have multiple jobs, they have, and the impact is much bigger if someone leaves or someone's sick or not working, not doing their job. It's much more visible.

5.4.5 Financial worries and uncertainties for the SME

These refer to the financial worries and anxieties generally perceived by the participants to be present due to the nature, size and type of business, particularly, the fact that it is an SME. **CE1** illustrates the concern that financial worries and uncertainties bring to the SME and the impact on decision making in the following vignette:

As an SME, you never have more than about 15 months' worth of cash. You've only got this visibility of I've got enough money for 15 months, you are constantly juggling, ok, I need to hire more people because I am winning business, but if I hire more people, that means I am going to spend more cash. Do I hire more people, or do I not hire more people and therefore, totally just exploding the business because we are not ready for this huge opportunity that we are getting? So, those are the kind of tensions you find in an SME, you want to invest in people, you want to hire more people, you have to hire more people, but you don't want to because you are worried about what's going to happen in March next year.

For **CE1** this was a good example of how emotions were influenced by the uncertainties created in entrepreneurial decision-making. This point is discussed further in section 6.9 of Chapter 6. **SM2** also shared that their anxieties were linked to worrying about "uncertain things, say with all finance of the business." This was particularly true for **SM2** due to their role in the finance team within the organization.

These two illustrations show the generic concerns about finances for an SME in general and are similar to the views shared by the SME entrepreneurs and business

owners in the phase one and phase two findings. What was interesting about the phase three findings was that a majority of staff members did not share their worries about SME finances. This was more apparent for leaders and senior managers in the case study SME organization.

5.4.6 Anxieties about partnerships, joint ventures and investors for the SME

The case study SME organization heavily relies on partnerships and joint ventures with large telecommunications, banking and insurance organizations for business partnerships and joint ventures (see section 1.3.3 of Chapter 1). Therefore, there were inherent anxieties created by such relationships and these were shared by the participants at all levels. Another worry was the fact that some of the partners were also investors and the organization heavily relied on investors to support the business. So, decisions by investors also caused anxieties in relation to the decisions and opportunities linked to investments. For example, **HD1** provided an illustration of the situation by stating:

Another one I think, not that I get anxious about it, too much, but there is some level of anxiety within the management team, when we're presenting our financial business cases to our investors, where we're seeking additional funding for the business. So, not only presenting numbers that are realistic and believable, but also, presenting them in a way that is positive but also realistic and then really awaiting the outcome from our investors whether they want to continue to invest in us or not.

HD1 is alluding to the anxieties created for making a business case to investors and the worries of anticipating the outcome. **MA1** also described the anxieties associated with the reliance on investment, stating "I think with the individual kind of circumstances of [organization name], where it's not yet a profitable company, there's always the risk that the next round of investment that we go for, the shareholders simply say no, this has come to the end of its life."

CE1 provides a further illustration of this:

The investment round got finished in January and part of that was that, one of the investors is a company called [company name], they have one hundred and fifty million clients in five countries in Asia and that was in mid-January. As part of that investment, they promised, we promised that we would bring our intellectual property and our computer systems and our operational know how and they would bring clients. And actually, as a big corporation they don't really like doing kind of top down. What they've done is given us a hunting licence to go into their business unit, but we are having to sell from the ground up. There is tension because we are not really staffed up to deal with that kind of situation.

Concerns about partnerships, joint ventures and investors were more often shared by members of the executive committee and the finance team and at the organizational level. All the categories discussed above fell into the theme of the nature of the SME as an organization. It is important to note that some of the categories overlap with the categories in the causes for anxiety theme. The differences and similarities of these themes are discussed in Section 6.8 of Chapter 6.

5.5 Causes of Anxiety for the SME - Organizational and Social Relational Levels

The theme of the **causes of anxiety** reveals mainly organizational and social level categories. Participants did not allude to personal reasons for the causes of anxiety but focused more on organizational and work-related anxieties in their explanations. Eleven categories were placed under the theme of the causes of anxiety. The main explanations given by all the participants about the factors that were causing anxiety in the entrepreneurial SME organization included anxieties about the executive team decisions, finances for the SME, winning work/contracts, risks linked to expanding to developing countries, people and performance, clients, recruiting staff overseas, fast

growth of the SME and resources, the external environment, tight deadlines and failure of projects.

These categories do overlap with the some of the categories that reflect the theme of the **nature of the SME** discussed in section 5.4. However, these categories were linked to the issues specific to the organization due to the reasons given by participants. For example, the category of finances appears in more than one theme. The category of financial concerns in the theme titled “nature of the SME” refers to the SME’s general financial concerns and worries about the future. However, there were some current and specific causes of financial anxieties for the SME. For example, payroll and investment issues were shared by the participants as factors causing anxieties. Thus, categories pertaining to finances were included in the causes of anxiety for the organization. The following sub-sections discuss the categories that illustrate the theme of the causes of anxiety for the SME. Some of the categories mentioned above are joined together with relevant statements by participants from all levels of the organization. These verbatim illustrations provide rich textual evidence of the thoughts and interpretations of the participants.

5.5.1 Executive team decisions causing anxiety

The decisions of senior management and specifically the executive team were perceived as a key cause of anxiety and tension for staff in the entrepreneurial SME organisation. Staff dealt with this issue differently, as some saw the decisions as restricted to their department and work, whereas others saw it as inevitable due to the needs of the business. For example, **SC1** felt that the decision to invest in stress management training by senior management was a good thing, but also felt that senior management was making a bad decision by not investing in more training. In fact, an eventual decision was being made to get rid of the in-house training function, which caused anxieties for **SC1**. The decision to get rid of the in-house function was made by the executive committee, which also caused anxiety for **HD2** as it meant losing a member of staff in **HD2**’s team. However, **MA1** stated that it was a necessary decision by the executive committee, as a business development role would be more beneficial to the enterprise.

HD1 also discussed the challenges involved in decision making by the executive team, as **HD1** was a member of the executive team stating:

Yeah...when it comes to structuring the team, hiring people, you're always uncertain as to whether that's the right decision that you've made for the business and I think the only way that you can judge the results of that is what actually happens afterwards and the impact of your decision.

HD1 went on to state that he deals with the impact of his decisions by speaking to his team and the management team. He also alluded to the fact that he is aware that not all leadership decisions will be popular, and some will cause anxieties. This point also illustrates the contradictions and tensions caused by entrepreneurial decision-making (Shephard, 2010).

Members of the executive committee, which includes the **CE1**, **CO1** and **HD1**, all shared their own anxieties about decisions made in relation to the enterprise. For example, decisions to expand to new developing countries always caused anxieties both to staff and members of the executive committee. However, the main strategy for the enterprise is growth through building clients in developing countries, as discussed in Chapter 1. The organisation's business aim is to provide micro insurance for poor people in developing countries. So, decisions made in relation to the choice of country to expand to and how to work with those foreign branches would always cause inevitable anxieties.

This point is illustrated by **HD1**, who stated:

We're taking products to market through distribution partners. That is pretty ground-breaking, and therefore we're constantly making decisions based on what we think is the best direction to go, not necessarily based on all the facts. So, we're in a position where we fail occasionally, sometimes frequently, depending on the situation, and then we must make sure that we're failing fast,

learning from what we're doing and then trying not to make the same decisions again.

This statement shows a pragmatic approach and provides evidence of the social defences used to deal with anxieties. **CO1** also made comparisons with the decision making between himself and **CE1**, by alluding that **CO1** was more risk averse and anxious about making certain decisions by stating:

So, in this situation, my anxiety about the future of the organisation will cause me not to take risks in terms of saying, right we who should recruit more people because when we get funding, we are going to need them in place. Umm, as compared to other people in the organisation, our CEO is less risk averse, therefore, would naturally be less anxious about things and therefore would be more inclined to make a decision that says, this will all be fine and say we need to go ahead and recruit people because we don't have any issues going forward. So yes, I think being anxious does impact it.

5.5.2 Anxiety about finances specific to the SME organization

Specific financial concerns about the organization were shared by participants, especially some of the members of the executive committee and senior management team such as **CE1**, who discussed challenges in relation to payroll, stating "The question was, 'Are we going to be able to make payroll for Christmas?' Can you imagine failing to pay payroll at Christmas?" **CE1** also stated: "I feel mentally responsible for everyone that works in my company. And so, it's my responsibility to pay the payroll for 150 families and if I miss that payroll, then 150 families are going to have a really bad day. This statement shows the anxieties that members of the leadership team felt in relation to the SME's financial challenges.

HD1 also mentioned a time period of when cash may run out and the anxieties this would create: "So my outlook goes around about 18 months, which is kind of our cashflow forecast where.... cash burn and money runs...." In fact, **CE1** had made a statement that SMEs in general only tend to have about "15 months" cashflow. **SM1**

also discussed the impact of not making money on a project and the concern it causes, stating:

I guess it adds to the concern that the company has spent money and not made money. But the odd way that we're funded sort of mitigates that to some degree in that we're invested, we've got investment money. But, at the end of the day, we have to, we're working towards being a profitable business and that doesn't help. Three months of four people working, for nothing, doesn't help.

Thus, **SM1** was alluding to the burdens created by losing money, but also alluded to the protection provided by investors. **AD1**, also reveal how the funding by investors both provided a comfort and a worry, by stating:

I think because the company is funded, we know that the funding is coming up and the money's coming in and I know how much money goes out a month. So, I know when we're OK and when maybe, are we getting more funding? So, of course you know, in any job when you're in finance there's an air of confidentiality, but you can see how, you know money is coming in and money going out is working. So, I suppose there's always going to be that slight worry unless you are a massive profit-making company with thousands of pounds coming in consistently.

These statements by the participants at all levels from senior management to administrator seem to show that the SME organization heavily relies on investment funds for its finances and that there were inherent worries/anxieties attached to that.

5.5.3 Anxiety about winning work/ contracts

The SME organization participants also showed concerns about the challenges of maintaining contracts and winning work. **CE1** talked about the challenges and stress that was caused by partnerships:

I think that's a stress and linked into that is the whole area round partnerships. Because, I mean, partnerships are with the suppliers and with distributors that the organisations, you ...need to work with. If they don't perform, if they don't

work well, then that has a direct impact on your ability to trade and also on your ability raise more money in the future and the like. So, you are looking for your partners to actually deliver

HD3 also stated: “So you know, so you spend six months building a solution and then the product doesn’t launch because there’s no contract in place or they’ve [referring to clients] never signed anything to agree to do it”.

5.5.4 Risks linked to expanding to developing countries

Participants in the one-on-one interviews and focus group mentioned that the quick expansion and interactions with colleagues overseas brought its own anxieties for staff working in the UK. **HD1** provided a background to this issue by stating:

We went from four countries to ten countries in about a year. So, we were opening operations and legal entities in markets that we wouldn’t normally have chosen to operate in; this is because one of our partners was wanting us to develop and deliver products in the markets that they were in.

The issue of the expansion to other countries was something which affected not just staff members but managers, senior managers, heads of departments, and the entrepreneur founder (**CE1**) and co-founder (**CO1**). In other words, it was an organizational issue. The expansion to these new territories brought its own anxieties and apprehensions. There were examples given of failed expansions and how that created feelings and experiences of anxiety for individuals, teams, departments and the whole organisation. Another cause for anxiety and stress was the fact that senior management travelled regularly at short notice, especially during the times of expansion to new countries in Asia and Africa.

CO1 illustrates this point in the vignette below:

A very specific example at the moment, so we recently signed a joint venture with an organisation to deliver a number of projects in Asia. The joint venture itself had been delayed but expectations had been set with the customers that we were due to be working with that things could move ahead. So, by the time we signed the joint venture, we were already up against time lines to deliver

projects at the same time, because we were waiting for the joint venture to be signed, we weren't able to recruit additional staff that were needed to deliver the project because we didn't know if the joint venture was going to be signed. Which therefore meant that when projects kicked off, although I am CO1 and supposed to be taking a strategic oversight type role, I actually ended up being the project manager and implementation resource for one of the major projects which is in Bangladesh (laughter)? I've spent much of the last three months in Bangladesh working essentially full time under this project whilst having to maintain my CO role. So, that means that I am typically doing, 10/11 hours at the office in Bangladesh and then going back to the hotel room doing a further 5 or 6 hours of calls, emails, etc. on UK time whilst in Bangladesh. Umm catching a few hours' sleep and then going back to the office. And so, that's one particular example, umm obviously causes an amount of anxiety just in terms of being able to deliver what is expected for that project but also being able to keep my broader responsibilities under control and manage as well as I can whilst delivering on that project

For the **CO1**, this was an example from the business that caused anxiety with physical and emotional consequences for him personally. **CO1**'s vignette also highlights the resourcing pressure typical for SMEs. **CE1** also illustrates the tensions of having the business in different countries stating:

So, I think it is a little bit more complicated than just a typical SME, working in a single country or a single office. There's lots of these kinds of layers of different cultures, lots of different people from different countries. Umm but I think that probably the biggest kind of spark points of anxiety.

For both leaders in the SME organization, the challenges of running a multi-national SME brought with it resourcing, cultural and personal anxieties. The organization's administrator also sympathised with the leaders. **AD1** discussed the challenges of new country expansions and how that caused anxieties, stating:

I would say... probably going to new countries is always going to be slightly anxiety provoking because they don't know the outcome and these countries

as well ... due to rules, different things that go on, and security in countries. Obviously, I've not personally travelled but I think travelling and evening travel, long travel, not knowing what's waiting for you at the other end, whether your driver's waiting. I think all the uncertainty causes anxiety in my opinion.

5.5.5 Anxiety over people and performance.

CO1 already alluded to resourcing issues in the previous vignette in 5.5.4 above. People resourcing, and performance created its own anxieties. **CE1** also shared anxieties over making decisions on people resourcing showing the complexities and tensions surrounding decisions on recruiting people:

So, those are the kind of tensions you find in an SME, you want to invest in people, you want to hire more people, you have to hire more people, but, you don't want to because you are worried about what's going to happen in March next year. You are constantly trying to work out, what will the business need to look like in March next year.....,

CO1 also discussed the pressure on people within the organization

Umm there is often a lot of individual pressure on people, umm, and nobody to I guess pick up things if you're, there isn't the capacity to deal with them. So, this makes me potentially anxious because they feel that they are the only one who can deliver and there is no one else to pick up any slack if needed.

In addition to the staff resourcing challenges, **HD2** also discussed the pressures on performance, which were often caused by the limited staff resources, stating:

Yeah, and this goes back to me not wanting to make a mistake, but we are under a lot of pressure, I work ridiculously long hours which isn't good for anybody and I mentioned informally prior to this meeting to you that you know that's when you make mistakes. You do, you're trying to be all things to all men and I think that's the issue with my role, because it's a small business I'm not

just you know reward manager or, you know, performance management, I do everything. So, I'm dealing with you know contracts of employment right the way through to strategic HR and it's quite hard to do that particularly, as I only have a small team and I can't hand off anything to anybody or for certain things. So, the pressure is always there, the prospect of making a mistake is always there so, you know failure of a project would just be the living end, you know I, if I was working really, really hard on something and it didn't work, that would just be a real disaster from my point of view

Worries about job performance also created anxieties, as this could lead to redundancies. When the focus group was asked the question, what caused anxiety, one participant stated, "I suppose the only time you, that kind of that might affect is like, you hear is, X, Y, Z is getting made redundant or all of a sudden you see like monster [jobs website] jobs come up." However, **STF3** disagreed, stating that "Well it didn't impact us." So, for **STF3**, there was no need to worry, as their job was perceived as safe.

5.5.6 Anxiety about the client.

Staff shared their anxieties in dealing with clients and customers with **HD3** stating:

... I think you know people will say the client's, customer's always right, I guess for us it's subtly different. So, cos we're primarily a business to business, to consumer player, then it's the business partners that we work with. I think part of the challenge we don't necessarily have clear rules of engagement agreed with those partners. So, it's quite easy for us to get embroiled into work that we might otherwise not get involved with. So, a larger, you know a larger organisation would say, "well this is what we're going to do and nothing more." Whereas, as an SME there's an element of, "well we do need to do it cos we want to be seen to be doing the right thing and if we don't do it they'll just go somewhere else." There's an element of, I don't know whether running scared is the right word, but it's a fear of losing that business if we have, if we don't do the right things.

This statement reveals the challenges SMEs face when they feel that they have no choice but to take on a business for survival. **AD1** also shared some personal challenges with dealing with clients, stating:

Yeah, I was quite nervous to speak to [client] in Africa, via Skype that I've never ever met or spoken to before. So that was yeah, a challenge, probably made me anxious to begin with just, you know to speak to somebody else because I was worried, I wouldn't be able to understand everything they said. But I did, but, I think, nevertheless you feel anxious about a situation that's new to you

HD2 due to the nature of their role perceived staff in the organization as the in-house customer/client, and shared some of the anxieties caused by servicing the in-house customer/client by stating:

Customer, well client and customer to me is everybody really in the workforce because they're all my clients if you like... I'm inward facing as a role really; I don't have that many external clients although I do some business with them. So, there's potential at any point for there to be anxiety on my part because I'm having to deal with a difficult situation because in my role I have to deal with a lot of difficult situations, so whether that's retrenchment, going into disciplinary hearings, dealing with somebody's grievance or just the fact that somebody's unhappy and they want come and talk to you, can create anxiety and it's more to do with how I help resolve their issue and what I can do to help them and what I can't do. So, it's really about a concern about not being able to deal with their issue in the most appropriate way for whatever reason.

5.5.7 Anxiety about recruiting staff overseas

In the focus group, there was a division of opinion about the recruitment of staff overseas, in this case, in India. There were those who felt that the growth to India and the recruitment of new staff members in the technology department in India was a threat and therefore was a factor that was causing them anxiety. They feared it could lead to redundancies in the UK. However, there were others in the focus group who

said that was not a threat at all. In fact, some saw the necessity for that growth and expansion and the necessity for the recruitment of those new members of staff. This is a good example of some of the contradictions and tensions of anxiety in an SME context, as illustrated below:

STF3 “[Name of Senior Manager] is not employing UK based engineers... [referring to senior manager] is in India, cos they’re cheaper.”

STF4 stated in disagreement, “it’s not as if the Indian people have replaced people here, they’ve just been an addition.”

STF2 provides an illustration of the challenges of working with the new overseas staff:

I mean it’s made it tougher cos it’s quite hard always working with an offshore team, especially when we’ve got four effectively brand-new people... So, it takes a lot of your time and that obviously impacts on everything else which, you know I guess drives your anxiety levels up because you’re not concentrating on the stuff you need to be doing.

STF3 also agreed with **STF2**, stating, “Yeah, dealing with the fall out new people in India at the moment not always, they’re not fully understanding what they need to do at the moment. They’ll get there, they will get there”.

5.5.8 Anxiety about fast growth and resources

CO1 discussed the challenges of being a fast-growing SME and the personal resources issues that that created, stating:

But as a small organisation and with the need to grow and manage the business, there is I guess a certain amount of pressure to deliver on timescales even if we believe they are unrealistic. And as a relatively small team operating across many countries, that does put additional pressure on just in terms of the workload. Umm, speaking personally, the team has grown rapidly, or the work has grown rapidly, the team not so much so. Umm there is often a lot of individual pressure on people, umm, and nobody to I guess pick up things if you’re, there isn’t the capacity to deal with them. So, this makes me potentially anxious because they feel that I am the only one who can deliver and there is

no one else to pick up any slack if needed. Added to that, I think that there is an additional pressure because of the work we do where people spend a significant amount of time travelling and away from home and so extra anxiety because of that pressure in being away from families.

HD3 also discussed the anxieties caused by the fast growth of the business:

..., if you really want to grow the business, then you can't necessarily treat it as if there's only 5 people in the business. You know you can't, if you can get those 5 people in a room and say "right, this is what we're doing" and get them all aligned to the direction you're going in that's fine. But, as the business grows, and certainly as it's spread geographically, then that becomes harder... Yes, so that creates additional tensions, it creates, it creates silos, and you get the sense ...I think it, yes, it's a, it's the fact that it's a growing business that, that doesn't necessarily have all the, all the roles and functions in place that a larger organisation would. So, you know, in other organisations you might have an internal communications function, well they'll make sure that things get communicated and presented in a way. But you know in an SME typically you don't necessarily have that role being fulfilled.

5.5.9 Anxiety from the external environment.

As an entrepreneurial SME organisation working on a multinational platform, there were inevitable external pressures. **HD1** provided a recent example of an incident that showed external pressures stating:

So, we were opening operations and legal entities in markets that we wouldn't normally have chosen to operate in, this is because one of our partners was wanting us to develop and deliver products in the markets that they were in. Some of the products didn't work as we would have wanted them to and our partner moved away from that initiative pretty quickly. That then left us in markets that we didn't necessarily want to be in. So, we then had to make some pretty tough decisions about exiting those markets.

5.5.10 Anxiety about the tight deadlines

This category was shared by almost every participant as a big factor that caused anxiety. **SM1** gave an example, stating:

We've currently got an ongoing project in India where they're being very tight with the information, they give us and are short with the deadlines that we've got, and you know, I'm having to get the team to work hard and work extra hours to achieve these goals. But, at the end of the day, the failure of the team involves me, so trying to, you know, it's always anxious trying to get it. I wouldn't say that it's stressed, and we try not to have a blame culture here and pull together, but you know, people do feel that they're going above and beyond to achieve this project

This statement also shows the coping mechanism by staff in relation to the tight deadlines. They all seem to agree with the situation and seem to share a common purpose in supporting one another. This is a shared anxiety and a very good example of anxiety as a social emotion. Indeed, the following statement by **SM1** reveals this point further when **SM1** stated:

It's the tight deadlines and the importance of the project to the company. You know, we are a small company, therefore the failure of a project or the collapsing of a business partnership will impact everyone directly, whereas bigger companies may be able to absorb that.

AD1 also referred to the pressure by saying: "I think a lot of people are under pressure to, get things done by a deadline." Indeed, staff at all levels seem to agree that the tight deadlines were inevitable and there was a "we are in it together" attitude towards the situation despite the anxieties it created.

5.5.11 Anxiety about the failure of projects

Failure of projects was a common worry and cause for anxiety for many participants, especially those in the IT department, as they were responsible for delivery of major organization's projects. For example, **STF1 stated** "You'll work on a project and you'll hear nothing of it and it'll get parked and that's it." Staff were very keen to share how failure of projects caused anxieties. **SM1** also confirmed this issue by stating: "Yeah, well we created a whole product for Burkina Faso, worked probably three months on it, got it almost ready to deploy it live and the whole thing went." **HD3** also discussed this issue of projects management and failures by stating:

So, one of the challenges we have is a lack of from this, from the top of the business there isn't a clear prioritisation of projects. So, you know is project A more important than project B? Don't know, unless somebody, you know unless the CEO has said, "this is the most important project," which he has done on one project, then it's really hard to know that. So, for example in my team's case I've defined the priorities as far as I see them for my team. Because there hasn't been anything coming from above. So, there's a reliance on, on people lower down the organisation to make decisions. One of the biggest challenges in an SME is, in addition to the volume of work is the concurrency of that work. So, it's the context switching from one project to another and, when you don't have when you don't have a clear priority from above, how does an individual know when they're context switching, or they've got two tasks to consider, how do they know which ones the most important? So that's why I have a prioritisation for my team, cos I know they're context switching several times a day if not dozens of times a day because of the sheer volume of work that's going on.

From the detailed narrative, it seems that the blame for the failure of projects often lay on the decisions of the executive committee, but this was not made very clear by the participants. However, it was obvious that this created tensions and anxieties.

5.5.12 Completed staff questionnaire answers on the causes of anxiety

In addition to the focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews, data was collected from fourteen participants in the SME organisation who did not want to be interviewed but completed the questionnaire anonymously. From the completed questionnaires, respondents were given the opportunity to tick a list of issues that would cause anxiety.

The list of factors in the questionnaire was compiled following the outcome of the pilot focus group with the SME entrepreneurs/Business Owners. The questionnaire was created for the semi-structured interviews and for anonymous completion by those who did not want to be interviewed. The responses given in relation to the causes of anxiety by staff who only completed the questionnaire anonymously were quite varied and contradictory. Table 5.3 below show the variations:

Factors listed in questionnaire that caused anxiety in the entrepreneurial SME	Number of respondents from the total of 14 that indicated it caused them anxiety with the respondents' allocated codes
Client/customer problems	4 out of 14 (STQ2, STQ7, STQ11, STQ14)
Business partnership problems	1 out of 14 (STQ5)
Financial	4 out of 14 (STQ1, STQ7, STQ12, STQ14)
Failure of projects	9 out of 14 (STQ1, STQ4, STQ6, STQ7, STQ9, STQ10, STQ11, STQ12, STQ13)
Making decisions about work related issues	2 out of 14 (STQ3, STQ4)
Senior managers	1 out of 14 (STQ2)
Other members of staff	4 out of 14 (STQ2, STQ10, STQ11, STQ12)

Other issues	4 out of 14 but only 1 indicated cause as work deadlines (STQ4, STQ6, STQ12, STQ14)
None of the above	1 out of 14 but did not indicate (STQ8)

Table 5.3 questionnaire responses on the causes of anxiety

Ten out of the 14 anonymously completed questionnaires came from the largest department in the organisation, which is the IT Department. As this department is largely projects driven and forms the operational core of the SME organisation, the issue of failure of projects caused the most anxiety for staff, as nine out of fourteen cited failure of projects as the biggest cause of anxiety. This is also reflected in the comments of the participants in the staff focus group, by **SM1** and **HD3**. Four respondents stated that their anxieties were caused by other members of staff and for one respondent, it was caused by the senior management team. However, they did not elaborate on the reasons why, perhaps to maintain anonymity. Four participants each indicated that the finances of the organisation, their customers and clients also caused anxieties. These concerns were confirmed in the one-on-one interviews and staff focus group data. Two stated that making decisions and workload caused anxieties. The factors that caused the least anxiety were business partnership problems and finances. This factor was shown not to be a worry for the staff members but more for the senior management and leaders of the organization.

5.6 Anxiety as a Social Emotion – Social/Group level (Meso)

This section discusses how the findings show the socially themed aspects of anxiety. These are the team, group, meso and social relational aspects of anxieties experienced by the participants within the organization. The categories linked to this theme include anxiety as a social emotion namely that anxiety is socially embedded, the communication of anxieties, sensing of others' anxieties, anxieties caused by the (entrepreneurial) leadership and evidences of social defences against anxiety. Each category is now discussed in the following sections with detailed illustrations as required in qualitative content analysis.

5.6.1 Anxiety is socially embedded

From the findings, it was evident that anxiety was socially constructed, and that anxiety is a social emotion that is embedded within the entrepreneurial SME case study organization. Anxiety was embedded in the interactions within teams and between departments. One key aspect that constantly showed up was the fact that the nature of the SME work meant constant deadlines. And these tight deadlines often caused individual anxiety, team anxiety and organisation anxiety. It is something which is created because of the relationships and the interactions between individuals within their teams, with the executive and senior management teams, the heads of departments, clients and colleagues overseas.

Especially, references were made by participants of the need to work together due to the pressures and desire not to let one another down, as previously mentioned in 5.5.11. **STF2** illustrated this point from the focus group, stating: "... It kicks up the anxiety.... you get all this stressed out, cos you don't want to let anybody down because it's a small place....in a way that we all pull our weight."

However, **HD3** stated that how due to the implementation of a stress management training, more staff began complaining of stress which was a contradiction saying:

But I do,... I worry that when we do stress management training people then are all very stressed and that....I've seen it in other organisations where we've done it, you know you run the training and suddenly everybody gets stressed and. Yeah I guess it's a bit of a buzz word isn't it, if you use it enough

So, from this comment, according to **HD3** it seems that once people started discussing stress, it seems a social emotion is created.

5.6 2 Communication of anxieties

Issues such as communicating anxieties with the line manager, subordinates, and the executive team, and inter-team communication challenges, were discussed by the participants. The findings show that there were differences in ways in which participants shared their experiences of anxiety. In relation to the topic of sharing anxieties with others in the team, some indicated that they did not talk about their

anxieties. For example, **STF4** stated “I feel as if I said something they’d say, ‘well everybody’s in the same boat, so just get on with it.’” Another focus group participant, **STF5**, agrees, stating “Yeah, because you see that feeling with all the guys in this environment, you don’t need to say anything it cos you know that the other guy feels the same.”

This view is supported by the evidence from the completed questionnaires. When asked if staff members talked about anxieties in the organization six out of the fourteen respondents answered “never,” eight out of the fourteen respondents answered “rarely,” and the remaining one participant answered “sometimes.” This meant that most respondents agreed that anxieties were not being discussed by staff members in the organization. However, there seem to be differences within teams, as **MA1** indicated: “I mean, we are in an open plan office, so we have to be a little bit careful in terms of what information is shared because we have access to a lot of information that isn’t public knowledge or isn’t even to be shared with others... But yeah, I mean we certainly talk as a team.” This explanation may be attributed to the team dynamics and the leadership of **MA1**’s team.

From the interview data, some indicated that they were willing to tell their line managers about personal challenges and anxieties. **MA1** illustrated this point by stating:

I think also, I’m very lucky to be in a position where I have a very good working relationship with my line manager, and we can talk these things through. So obviously two people can see two different, or the same set of numbers and actually interpret those very differently and by having a boss who’s very experienced to go to and say, this is what I see, is that the same, that can actually be very reassuring in some cases.

So, it seems that a good relationship with the line manager was necessary for the communication of anxieties. **SM2** also indicated a willingness to share their anxieties with their line manager, whereas another senior manager felt that they would only share their anxieties with a close member of staff (**SM1**) and not necessarily their line manager. **IT1** also shared the same sentiments, stating that they would not share their

anxieties with a line manager. So, the findings show how the sharing of anxieties differed at the team levels.

In terms of communicating with subordinates, a senior manager stated “I do not tell my subordinates” about anxieties. Moving up the organisational level, the heads of department stated that they were less willing to talk about the challenges in relation to their roles with their subordinate; this was also true for **CE1** and **CO1**. However, **HD1** stated:

The exec team don't have all the answers, so it's important to share concerns where we can. Obviously, there are certain situations that we can't share because of the sensitive nature of them in the direction of the business or things like that. But where we can share those, to get as many inputs or ideas, listening to people and that I think helps them be part of the process to move forward.

This indicated that the leadership team only shared anxieties that were not too “sensitive in nature.” So, there was selective communication of anxieties on the part of the entrepreneurial leaders and the senior management of the organization.

SM1 also discussed open communication, stating:

I discuss it openly with my team and I say, look we've got these two people leaving, we are going to look at what we do with those roles, so they're already aware that we might not be replacing like for like. They know the goals that we're setting out for the year. I've discussed that with the team and I'll obviously discuss it with individuals, especially individuals who I think might be prone to worry more than others and the ones directly impacted by the people moving. So, we've got hand-over plans while the people are still here, and we've got some team movements for the first month that they've gone.

AD1 also supported this by commenting on how the senior management team did share information through staff meetings, albeit limited, by stating:

Yeah, we have these meetings and they'll explain where we are. It's important I think to do that because it keeps the whole team, people as the company involved in what is going on. You don't have to tell everybody everything that's

going on but to just to give them a general you know, i.e., the company is doing good at the moment and this is why we're going to these countries.

The findings show that staff members in the focus group and interviews seemed more willing to share their challenges about their anxieties. They indicated that they were willing to go to their department heads or line managers to share the challenges and the anxieties created by their roles. However, some staff members said that they were not willing to share their anxieties generally with their team members and they themselves talked about the fact that their anxieties were only shared with a close member of staff. So, there was evidence of contradictions in the responses given by staff members, managers and leaders about sharing and communicating anxieties in the organization.

5.6.3 Sense of others' anxieties

The sense of other's anxiety within the organization and sharing challenges with roles were also topics discussed in the interviews and focus group. Two categories illustrate the sensing of other's anxieties namely, the anxieties of others in the team/ organization and the anxieties of the entrepreneurial leaders.

As a theme, the sensing of others' anxiety was evident in the findings. There were, however, contradictions in the way people responded to the anxieties of other members of staff in the team and organization. For instance, one manager talked about a staff member who was made redundant and as a result, before the staff member was made redundant, she went through an anxious process and was thereby given support. Another manager discussed the fact that a member of staff who was going through an experience of anxiety and difficulties in the workplace was treated in a way by individuals which made them feel even more anxious. The participant was reluctant to elaborate on this issue, indicating a leadership issue.

AD1 provides an illustration on how anxieties are sometimes sensed and shared openly stating:

Yeah, I think workload here a lot of people are under pressure to, well like all jobs to get things done to a deadline. So yes there are sometimes I will quite happily go and say to people "how are you, you know today?" or, they will openly, some people say, you know "I've been having not a very good day or struggling with some work. I've got to go home and do some more on it now" and I think they look a bit stressed.

SC1 provides an example where there is a lack awareness of the anxieties of others by stating:

I've seen a lot of things where peoples' behaviours are causing you know [anxiety], I'll give you an example. One of the girls came in, it's half past seven, and one of the other, one of her male colleagues came up to her with a problem, she hadn't even got her coat off, you know and I had to say to him, why don't you give her a few minutes to get a cup of tea, get her coat off, settle down then you come and see her. You don't tackle people as they enter the building. That just puts people you know, well. you know she obviously, she wasn't very happy, and, I would clearly say she was in some kind of stressful state.

HD2 also stated how other's emotional outbursts caused anxieties:

Well I think there's emotional outbursts which affect working relationships isn't there and I've seen plenty of those and it's inevitable when you're under a lot of pressure that these things do happen but of course it can be quite damaging to internal relations. I myself had a little moment when I had a bit of a go and not particularly proud of it, but this is what happens when those kinds of things occur. So, I think that's the problem. There's also a, I think when people are annoyed with one another or where there's a lot of pressure, people can make, I suppose imbalanced judgements can't they. They can choose to go down a certain path, it's unhelpful, or say something or send an email that's just got a

tone to it that just causes people stress. However, **CE1** as the entrepreneurial leader shared that it was important to understand other people's anxieties, and this was easier in an SME, stating:

I think it is important for leaders to really show interest and acknowledgement in the things that concern their staff. It's like again, a family. You wouldn't ignore your children, even if you think they weren't important, you would address your children's concern. CE1 went on to provide an illustration of the time he had taken a particular interest in staff member's anxieties.

HD1 shared this concern for staff in the overseas offices by explaining:

I could have you know a member of staff from any, you know I could get a Skype chat message from a call centre member of staff in Nigeria who's concerned about their salary. You know and, they're anxious because they've got mouths to feed or whatever and it's how we deal with that and how we support them through that process and try and help them

There were also contradictions in relation to sensing others' experiences of anxiety from the anonymously completed questionnaires; only a few people answered that they were aware of others being anxious. The respondents who only completed the questionnaire were vague about their sense of others' anxiety, and this may be attributed to the way the question was asked. Ten respondents answered "don't know" when asked if they were aware if another member of staff was anxious about a situation. However, four answered "Yes" without elaborating. In contrast, in the one-on-one interviews, all participants who were interviewed had been aware of another member of staff going through an anxious process in the workplace. That was the same also for the focus group participants.

In terms of sensing the anxieties of the entrepreneurial leaders, participant views were contradictory. When asked if staff had witnessed or seen senior management looking or feeling anxious about the business, **SC1** stated "No I haven't I've never seen it, no." But, **SC1** also went on to give an example of a head of department showing anxiety by commenting "I have seen, I have seen [name] a little bit anxious

at times that's probably, you know having her expertise questioned by lay people who do not know what they're talking about, you know."

5.6.4 Anxiety caused by (entrepreneurial) leadership – social/group level

Another key finding was that some heads of departments, managers and staff talked about the fact that sometimes their anxieties came from the executive committee. This theme was categorised as senior managers/managers perspectives and other staff perspectives. Some heads of department who were not in the executive committee felt that sometimes a member of the executive team was the person, due to their leadership style, causing them the anxiety, as illustrated by **HD2** in the following vignette:

So, there are senior managers who are incredibly planned and organised, we've got extremes here, we've got people who are so detailed, so organised that they could be accused of micro management, then you've got other managers who are very sort of laissez faire in their approach to management. So you're having to appease both types of manager, but what you find that for the micro manager, you find that nothing is ever good enough, so whatever you do, there's always a comment or a something missing which causes anxiety because you think you can't satisfy them, you're consciously putting together work and trying to deliver but every time you deliver something there's always something wrong with it. So that's your micro manager.

The laissez faire is the one that says yeah, yeah, yeah get on with it, get on with it, get on with it but doesn't give you any guidance. So, potentially what you end up with is putting something in place that he doesn't like, because he hasn't steered you in the right direction. So, you've always got that conflict and it's really difficult to get it right. So, if you're the type of person like me who struggles when they fail or doesn't, or struggles when they make a mistake, gives myself a really hard time over it. The anxiety is always there, am I going to do enough to satisfy the micro manager, and have I read a laissez faire manager right in terms of what he wants, and that's really quite difficult. So, there's always a level of anxiety there for me in terms of making sure that I, I deliver.

There was a constant message across all levels that the leadership was causing anxieties. However, the view that the leadership was helping to solve the problems within the organisation was also shared by participant staff members.

HD1 acknowledge the situation of the leadership causing anxieties, stating:

Yes, there are concerns which is kind of more, more what I would kind of, I mean if you want to kind of say concerns rather than anxieties then yeah I mean some of the dynamics between the ex-co-team members because we're, I don't want to be too generic here but it's kind of like you've got four alpha males on an executive committee all which have strong opinions and are strong leaders. But all of which have completely different personality types. So, we have recognised that, and we have undertaken over the past year and a half some reflective analysis of our own personality types.

HD1 seems to show that the leadership team was aware of the tensions about the leadership issues. **HD3** was very vocal about the fact that some of the executive leadership was causing anxiety. **HD3** stated:

So, one of, one of the challenges particularly I think here in a, in a relatively small SME is, is the level of experience of dealing with larger enterprise "challenges" in the, in the leadership team. If you've got people who are leading the business who don't have that experience.

The managers, especially from the interviews, were quite critical of the leadership at the top, often citing examples of where the leaders have not listened or have created an environment which was stressful for managers and other members of staff. **SC1** provides an illustration, stating:

Well I've just brought in stress management training, so there was nothing before, absolutely nothing, and let's just say that I put a schedule in for its delivery and it was rejected by certain individuals up there, up the food chain to

say “no we’ll put this off” because they were so worried about it you know....Yeah I’ve seen that, yeah I’ve seen that in a, I’ve seen that with you know the directors, trying to score points off each other when I’ve briefed them on L&D. I’ve given them a presentation and they’re scoring points off each other and I’m thinking “god this is pretty bad,” you know.”

So, the statements show that there was a disconnect and contradictory tensions in some managers’ responses about anxiety, and its link to the leadership, when compared to the responses of the members of the executive committee on the same issue. Interview data from staff members who were not in leadership positions were also contradictory. Some staff members felt that the leadership was very supportive and in fact showed empathy by acknowledging the fact that leaders were also going through difficulties. Since they were constantly travelling, they were constantly thinking about the business and especially the survival of a business. For example, **STF2** stated in the focus group “They (referring to the leaders of the SME) are, I believe personally this is just my opinion that I believe they know and they relate, and they understand, for the business to survive we have to react, we have to be first to market and if we’re not then that’s our bread gone.”

In contrast, some staff members from the interview data and the questionnaire respondents felt that the leadership perhaps was not really listening to the needs of staff lower down and thus causing anxieties. For example, **IT1** shared that senior managers are not making things clear enough for staff, especially information about projects, restructuring and redundancies, and staff are feeling anxious and frustrated.

5.6.5 Defences against anxiety at all levels – social/group level

The defences against anxiety for the case study SME are categorised as follows:

- Rationalization:
- Protection: individual and team members
- Professionalism
- Splitting work and personal anxieties
- Common purpose of an entrepreneurial SME
- Denial of anxiety

The literature review showed that social defences both help organizational members to manage anxiety-provoking situations and hinder organizations by insulating people from the consequences of their actions (Krantz, 2010). Thus, in addition to anxiety manifesting at the different levels within the enterprise, there is also very strong evidence of social defences against anxiety at the individual level, the team level as well as the organisation levels. The responses of the participants for each category is discussed as follows:

Category- Rationalization

Often, there was a need to rationalize the issues the organisation is going through so as to protect reputation. The vignette below from **HD1** illustrates this tension, namely the need to protect the organisation by making decisions to fail fast and learn from bad decisions:

We're in a position where we fail, occasionally, sometimes frequently depending on the situation and then we have to make sure that we're failing fast, learning from what we're doing and then trying not to make the same decisions again. So, an example of that is that we expanded pretty rapidly in Africa two years ago. We went from four countries to ten countries in about a year. So, we were opening operations and legal entities in markets that we wouldn't normally have chosen to operate in, this is because one of our partners was wanting us to develop and deliver products in the markets that they were in. Some of the products didn't work as we would have wanted them to and our partner moved away from that initiative pretty quickly that then left us in markets that we didn't necessarily want to be in. So, we then had to make some pretty tough decisions about exiting those markets. So, in hindsight we've put well using hindsight we've actually put more governance within the business on how we make decisions.

SM2 also rationalised the redundancy decisions despite the negative consequences to the team by stating:

Well because I do understand the rationale in why the executive committee has to make that decision, so probably, it helped that I know why they have to do it and why it needs to be done and what lies ahead.

SM1 provided a rationalization for the restructure and redundancies stating:

But, you know, business is business and people move on. Last year we lost quite a few people in a row and you know, we're still here and still doing the job and you have to go back to those and say, look, we got through that period of uncertainty, this is just a little blip and we'll get over it and move on.

The need to protect one's opinions, so as not to come across too critical or too negative about their role, the organization and leadership was evident within some departments. This was prominent especially in the narratives of the finance team when compared with the narratives of staff from the IT teams within the organization.

Category-Protection: individual and team members

STF2 tried to protect the leaders by stating:

I think they (referring to the CE1 and CO1) do understand they are as much under pressure. I'm sure they're feeling the pressure in different ways but, you know we can only work from our little pigeonhole and yes, everything pretty much filters down but I personally believe that they understand, and they feel it back up. They feel when we're under pressure too.

STF4 also provided an example of the SME leadership providing support for others with anxiety in the past, stating: "That guy who joined with us, can't remember his name, he had some, he had a lot of issues didn't he? And they [meaning leadership] were quite supportive there."

Similarly, **SM1** stated how training and development initiatives were being used by the organization to support the team:

We've had stress management courses going on and there's going to be a separate management one following on from that. It's very hard in a small company because we are driven by tight deadlines and goals and often we can't tell everyone everything, so you're giving people hopefully enough information that they can carry on doing their job without worrying about it. But it's a difficult balancing act.

However, the following Table 5.4 illustrates that the respondents who completed the questionnaire provided a mixed response about whether the SME organization responded and provided supported for anxiety in the workplace:

If the organization responds and provide support for anxiety in the workplace	Respondent answers
Support not provided	STQ2, STQ8, STQ10, STQ12, STQ14
Support sometimes provided	STQ1, STQ3, STQ4, STQ5, STQ6, STQ11
Support always provided	STQ9, STQ13
Not sure	STQ7

Table 5.4: How organization supported staff with anxieties from questionnaire

Four respondents agreed that the support was given, and six respondents said that support was given sometimes. Two said it was provided and one said that they were not sure. **HD1** also disclosed the protectionism that existed in their team:

So, when I sit down with my team, I'm more concerned about them as individuals and getting the maximum benefit that they can out of their work experience here, working with me and developing their skills and experience.

HD1 also provided a somewhat contradictory comment by showing how anxiety was alleviated by restructuring the team, stating:

So, in order to plan. I've needed to restructure my function to try and mitigate as much of that risk as possible that then alleviates some of the potential anxiety. But again, because we're a very small function in the head office I only have four people working for me here, all of which have critical roles. If one of those people are not available, then the responsibility comes on to me to do that work.

MA1 saw their role and position in the organization as a protection against anxiety, stating "So I think in some ways that being in my role probably reduces that anxiety because I see so much." **SC1** on the contrary saw the threat to their role as a source of anxiety stating:

My first impression was that, the senior managers were a bit negative towards you know L&D and you know investment in people and all that kind of thing. So, I was a little bit anxious to start with, with that because you know you just used to get a blank look from them really. You know. But, hopefully now I've had a chat with them all and you know it seems to be a lot better a lot more positive.

Category- Professionalism

There was also an element of social defences coming through in the responses of the managers and staff members, often manifested as a need to show professionalism personally, as a team or the organisation in general. **MA1** stated "I am able to plan ahead and reduce anxiety." **SC1** stated "I would define anxiety as having a negative effect on my behaviour, making me slightly defensive in terms of outlook." **SM1** also provides an illustration of this, stating:

Oh, I mean I'm pretty OK about it because I've got a good team and we're working towards... we're hitting the targets. You know, every day a different crisis comes along but you learn to sort of live with it and I think, as a manager, you have to manage the people issues and the project issues hand in hand

and, you know, if half the team were off sick or two hand their notice in, I've just got to carry on and do it. Flapping about is not going to help.

HD1: discussed professionalism in relation to the senior management team:

I think me as a person as an individual and also us as a management team, we're pretty reflective and we're pretty contemplative about the decisions that we've made. Within this kind of start-up or kind of new business model that we're in, we're going into markets that we haven't been in before that we don't understand completely"

HD3 discussed professionalism with respect to the team, stating:

So, we've spent you know the best part of two years provide, well we've been gathering metrics now on everything we do. So, we we're the most open team in the business. So, I present metrics to the executive committee every month on how we're doing, what we've done, what the costs of the projects is. But you know we're in an unfair position because we're the only team that says exactly what we're doing to the rest of the business. So, we are fully open and maybe that's our downfall that I expect everybody else to be open but nobody else is open.

Category- Splitting work and personal anxieties

Participants were keen to distinguish and split their work and personal anxieties. Only a few interview participants stated that they had personal anxieties, not related to their work. Whereas, the majority of the participants from the findings shared that their anxieties were work related rather than personal. **HD2** indicated this by stating; I'm fortunate enough at the moment.... I don't have any personal but there's nothing big going on in my personal life, so, my work is the biggest cause of anxiety at the moment."

AD1 stated "I'm, due to my financial situation, I'm quite happy, I'm, I'm fine in my position and I'm not worrying at all about the future. I feel quite confident in what they're

trying to achieve.” It is not clear whether **AD1** may have been more anxious if her personal financial situation was not fine, and she was not happy at work.

The following Table 5.5 illustrates how the staff who completed the questionnaire split personal and work induced anxieties. When asked to state if anxieties were induced by personal, work or organizational situations, these were the answers provided:

List of anxiety inducing issues	Codes of the respondents that agreed it was an issue
Personal	STQ1, STQ4 STQ6
Work related	STQ1, STQ2, STQ3, STQ4, STQ6, STQ9, STQ10, STQ14
Organizational	STQ10, STQ11, STQ12, STQ14

Table 5.5 Questionnaire respondents' list of anxiety inducing issues

Eight out of the fourteen respondents listed that work-related anxieties were the factor that induces anxieties compared with three who listed personal and four who listed organizational issues as inducing anxieties. However, STQ1, STQ4 and STQ6 listed both personal and work as anxiety inducing. Four respondents also listed organizational issues but did not elaborate. **CO1** was also keen to show the need to split work and family by stating:

I don't go out and socialise with the people from work. Umm, partly because I am not around much and when I am, I feel that I owe the time to my family and not to my work colleagues. So, I guess, I've always been more of a private person. I share my feelings with my family more than I do with my work colleagues.

Category- Common purpose of an entrepreneurial SME

The feeling of being a part of something bigger than oneself was shared by the focus participants, and sometimes used as a defence against the challenges of the work environment. The data from the focus group seem to have contradictions in that some felt that they were a part of the organisation, having a common goal with the

entrepreneurial leaders. **STF2** discussed this common purpose as a defence by stating:

It's not just their (referring to the CE1 and CO1) company, it's our company, we're all in it. If we don't do it, even if it's stressing us out a bit or whatever, then we might not be here tomorrow. So, then we'll be stressed out, cos we'll be job hunting....It's what we have to do for a social cause. Whereas, others said it was very difficult. They were finding it very hard. And some said they were finding it hard to cope with all.

STF4 agreed that he looks at the business as if it is their own business; however, **STF1** stated that they did not. **MA1** also shared sentiments similar to **STF4**, stating:

I've been here for seven years, so it's a company that I care deeply about. I've been very involved with it, in terms of its growth and with all of those things you then care for the people that you work with and unfortunately you wouldn't want to wish it on anyone that you should suddenly go, that's it, we're going to close shop.

CE1 also stated that "I feel proud about this company and I want it to succeed, in a way you feel proud about your child and you want your child to succeed." **HD1** also alluded to the faith that investors had in the business, stating:

We made some decisions to expand more rapidly and therefore we burnt our cash more quickly, then went back to our investors and said, "can we have some more cash?" They liked the direction that we were going, so they said, "yep you can have some more."

Category- Denial of anxiety

There was also evidence of denial of anxiety, especially at the senior management levels, and **HD2** demonstrated this point by stating:

I think that there are lots of people who are around who don't, who are unable to recognise symptoms of anxiety in themselves and therefore they don't think there's a problem with anxiety in the business and unfortunately one of those is at a senior level in the business, so therefore it's not being given, it's not being given the credence that it needs.

HD1 provides an example of denial of anxiety in the following statement:

I mean I don't really get anxious very much. I tend to recognise that when circumstances could be out of my control then I tend not to worry about them too much because there's nothing I can do to change, to change the outcome, but what I do is I try and influence the outcome as much as I possibly can. Anxiousness probably a couple of examples, one of them is where we've had audits in some of our overseas companies where we've presented the information knowing that there are some, there are some challenges in the way that, that the accounting had actually been undertaken and, therefore the outcome of that could have been very detrimental to our organisation.

SC1 also denied knowledge of the internal politics by stating "I, well I don't really you know I don't know; I don't know the internal politics of the organisation I don't get involved in it ...". However, previously, **SC1** criticised the leadership about this issue.

Often, heads of departments and senior managers would indicate their teams were fine and doing well. And yet, they would explain how the workload and the tight deadlines, or the behaviour of the entrepreneurial leadership is impacting on themselves and their teams and causing feelings of anxiety. Also, there was some denial about the impact of the redundancies, for example, when explaining the consequences of redundancies and impact of recent changes on their team. **SM2** provides an illustration of this, stating:

Well I don't think they're worried. I know that one person was leaving because they felt anxious about redundancy.... which isn't great if people are feeling like

that because, you know, I should be making them feel safe and not worried about it. But, you know, people always move on. Business is business.

HD2 Illustrated the organizational defences against anxiety by denying its existence:

We've talked about how we might support our employees with distress or anxiety whatever and, I think if I'm honest they've paid a bit of lip service to it, they haven't really embraced this as an issue and so what we've done in our latest annual survey, employee annual surveys, we've actually included some questions around stress and how people are feeling because, there's I think there's a view from the top that there isn't an issue with stress and anxiety in the business which is not shared by everybody

This narrative clearly demonstrates the denial of anxiety at the senior leadership level despite attempts to deal with stress and anxiety in the organization.

5.7 Individual Experiences and Challenges of Anxiety- Micro Level

Anxiety was seen at the individual level through the experiences of the leaders, heads of departments, managers and staff members in the entrepreneurial SME organization. The categories identified for this theme were experiences of anxiety and the personal challenges of anxiety.

5.7.1 Experiences of anxiety (Personal level)

The experiences of anxiety referred to by the participants included the physical and emotional experiences of anxiety. Interview and focus group participants referred to physical explanations of their experiences of anxiety. Most used the language "I couldn't sleep," "I get really tired," or "I get really frustrated." And also, participants/respondents also used emotional phrases to explain their experiences of anxiety such as "I get really angry. I've had enough. I feel I can't really share how I'm feeling"; "I am really worried"; "Sometimes I feel stuck"; "Things are quite sad"; "I feel good"" "I feel fine." **AD1** also provides an illustration by stating "All I would say is, your

head feels fuzzy and you just feel exhausted at the end of the day.” **STF4** provides an illustration of this stating:

As for how we feel, I personally I mean I’ve been, couple of stressful situations since I’ve been here and, it affected me physically, effects like headache, tiredness and as I said before, a sort of general feeling of your heart sort of increasing in rate.

Participants at all levels of the organization discussed the emotional and physical challenges of anxiety. **STF2** also shared the physical aspects of anxieties about work, stating:

...You’re so focused on it [work], I have woken up at 3 am in the morning thinking, “Oh I know how to solve that.” It is, sometimes you do feel it as it stays in your chest. I think, oh I really yeah, need to get it done I don’t want to let anybody down.

T1 also provides an illustration of this by sharing how his anxieties about his work leads to him “dreaming” about work at night. **SM1** also discussed the emotional experiences of anxiety, stating: “Yes, as I say it’s, you know, feeling near to the edge rather than you’ve fallen off the edge. **SM2** also provides the emotional experiences of anxiety, stating: “but because I don’t stop worrying so that’s my problem, so I know it’s something I need to deal with, but because I’m a planner and when things don’t go to plan, then I worry, so it’s just a never-ending cycle”. **HD2** also shares the physical impact of anxiety describing it as:

What I’ve experienced I mean I can honestly say; you know the tightness in the chest, kind of thing which is “oh my god I’m having a heart attack” when you’re incredibly stressed that can come it’s not very often. A tightening of muscles so back ache, back pain that kind of thing because you’re holding yourself in a different way. Sleepless nights, you know, waking up in the early hours of the morning worrying about work, and that’s got to be a sign of anxiety, hasn’t it?

The following vignette from **CE1** illustrates the emotional and physical consequences of anxiety:

You know, going over things in your mind. You know, I'm wonderfully blessed to kind of sleep easy just about anywhere at any time. Sleep is not a problem to me. But when you are really stressed, you don't sleep very well, and you become immensely tired. Emotionally, physically, you know and spiritually, you just become really drained. And then you end up kind of eating rubbish and feeling bad and can't stop.

5.7.2 The Personal challenges of anxiety

The personal challenges of anxiety revealed tensions and contradictions, with staff often looking at these tensions and contradictions from a positive and negative light. This can be seen at the leadership, management and staff levels. At the leadership level, **CE1** provides an illustration of personal challenges as an entrepreneurial leader by stating:

I think , I feel really passionately about [organization name]. I hope I never have to do another start- up, I really do. It's not a job, it's something, I mean it's not a child, but it is somewhere between a job and a child. It's how passionately I feel about it, you know. And for me, when someone says something bad about (SME name), I actually take it, it feels, it hurts me, it physically makes me angry when a customer isn't happy because I want us, the company to have done well. So, I feel very passionately about the company and so I think when people wouldn't understand what we do, or they misunderstand, or they misinterpret our intention. Umm or when the future for the company is uncertain that would make me anxious. Umm but I am generally a person, I would say that I am an extremely optimistic person, so I don't spend a lot of my life particularly anxious.

From this statement, **CE1** shares that the uncertainties about the future of the SME do create anxiety, but also contradicted this by stating that generally they are quite optimistic. Thus, there was an element of the denial of anxiety. **CO1** provided a practical illustration of the personal challenges as an entrepreneurial leader, stating:

Yeah, there are, personally I am anxious about this project that I am working on which is due to launch in 2 weeks for which I am about to go out to Bangladesh tomorrow. Here is a general level of anxiety on how I manage that along with the rest of the work that I am doing. Each of these projects that we

are doing, particularly with the joint venture project, is very critical to the business. People are anxious about the delivery of the projects, revenue towards our business, the number of people that we have to sign up. The joint venture is being watched by our partners. There is a part of me that feels that there might be holes in it because of not [being] able to give it the attention it deserves. And that is one of multiple projects that we have going on. So, people always have a certain level of anxiety around the things that they are delivering. Can they deliver on time and will they get the impact that is expected?

At the manager level, **SM2** and **MA1** both provided an illustration of personal challenges as a senior manager and as a manager respectively with **SM2** confesses to be a worrier stating:

I worry then I don't sleep as properly and then if it gets worse, say for example there is an issue that has come up in the afternoon and it's too late for me because of time difference to deal with it the same day, it will cross over [into] the next day, then I'll worry about it, sometimes I dream of it, I'll wake up in the middle of the night and think about it some more so, more surprisingly I find answers on certain issues in the middle of the night when I wake up or whilst having a shower...

Whilst **MA1** takes a more pragmatic approach by stating:

I think one of the advantages of being in my role is that you see everything. So, you know exactly how much money there is at any one time, you know exactly what the costs are. I think that can also be a downside as well, because you again, you see everything, and you have to make it kind of clear to yourself that you can't always make your subjective opinions, you have to stay very objective about that. So, I think in some ways that being in my role probably reduces that anxiety because I see so much. I think also I'm very lucky to be in a position where I've a very good working relationship with my line manager and we can talk these things through. So, obviously two people can see two different, or the same set of numbers and actually interpret those very differently and by having a boss who's very experienced to go to and say, this is what I see, is that the same, that can actually be very reassuring in some cases.

SC1, who is a senior consultant, discussed how difficult it was when awaiting a senior management decision about training staff and the anxiety that created by stating “Well you just feel like you’re in a limbo really, because you want to, you want to implement it and you know but you’re waiting for those particular individuals to say, yeah OK we agree with that and approve it and crack on you know.”

So, for **MA1**, there was security afforded due to the role and department **MA1** was situated within the organization, whereas for **SC1**, that was not the case as SC1’s position within the organization seemed more at risk.

IT1 shared candidly, the personal challenges and alluded to the fact that he had been suffering from anxiety related to work, which was now leading to panic attacks, and so was receiving help from the organization. **AD1** also provided an illustration of some of the recent personal challenges of anxiety:

It’s been difficult, it has, there is no doubt about it, it has been a challenge but I’m, I suppose very conscientious and I want to get the work done. So, if that means coming in and not speaking to a soul all day and putting your head down and getting on with your job then yes, so be it and to go home and you know think about a plan, what I’m going to do the next day, to write a list and work to priorities. But I have had to say, to a couple of members of the team that things won’t be done on the day they asked if I’ve got other jobs to do.

The vignettes and quotes provided an illustration of the experiences of anxiety at the personal, team and organizational levels for the SME. An analytical discussion of these issue is provided in Chapter 6.

5.8 Positive and Negative Effects of Anxiety (Macro, Meso and Micro Levels)

Anxiety is an emotion with positive and negative effects (Rosen, 2008). In the findings, the positive and negative effects of anxiety were shared by participants and these covered organizational, social and personal level explanations. As a result, there were inherent contradictions and tensions in the responses provided by the participants when explaining the effects of anxieties. Often, both negative and positive explanations are given to the same incident inducing or induced by anxiety.

A consistent and common issue from the findings is that all participants mentioned that the nature of the SME, the workload pressures, the tight deadlines, fast growth, sense of urgency, work roles, leadership actions and decisions of the SME created its own anxieties with positive and negative effects for themselves, their teams and the SME organization. The coping mechanisms shown at the organizational, social and personal level were varied and different. Some saw it as a positive thing and felt that it helped them to improve their work.

From a personal/individual perspective, some looked at their experience as a negative experience, stating, for example, that their role “creates more anxiety,” whilst others looked at their roles from a positive perspective, stating, for example, **MA1** stated “due to my role, I can see problems in advance and so [I am] not anxious.” **AD1** felt proud of her achievements despite her anxieties: “No I mean I, I think I felt anxious and I felt pressured but, but when the work is completed on time, and to what I consider a good standard, it makes me feel proud.”

AD1 provided a positive perspective on the effects of a negative work pressure:

Yeah, pressure sometimes is good cos it pushes you a little bit further than you perhaps would have done yourself because you would have just coasted and thought, well I'll just go nice and easy today. So, it's, yeah, it's been quite good.

MA1 provides an illustration of the positive effects of anxiety, stating: “I think, for me, I think I'm the type of person that always wants to improve, so if I can learn something from that experience this morning and make it better for next time.”

From a social/team level perspective, participants also looked at the positive and negative effects of anxiety. **HD1** shared the positive effects of the anxieties caused by redundancy for the team by stating:

So, speaking to my team about creating that new role gives them confidence that I'm trying to upskill the team and to give them or us a function as an improvement moving forward from where we were. Now, unfortunately that has an impact on one of the members of the team, but I think if they understand the reasons for doing it then it kind of makes it a little more palatable.

Also, **SM1** saw the benefits and positive effects of work pressures, commenting:

You know, there is always a pressure project, there is always a number one priority and I think that it's good to have an element of pressure. Some of the team if they haven't got deadlines to drive to, then they wouldn't get a lot done. So, I think there's a positive bit to that as well.

However, some said the pressure at work was a negative experience. It sometimes made it hard for them to really do the work effectively due to their anxieties. For example, **STF4** stated "It can often make things worse, if I'm under pressure." Also, **SM2** shared a negative spiral caused by worrying about their work, stating:

Yeah ... I don't stop worrying so that's my problem, so I know it's something I need to deal with but because I'm a planner and when things ... don't go to plan then I worry, so it's just a never-ending cycle, because... I haven't planned.....
Yeah, I do because, it's the only way I can meet targets and manage ...

The negative aspects of anxiety are revealed in the following illustration from a head of department, **HD2**, who shared the negative feelings following a mistake that had been made at work, stating:

Yeah, so, I was asked to check some redundancy data actually for a member of staff and I got it wrong. So, we communicated incorrect amounts to them. So, it's those kinds of things and of course often they're quite visible [referring to the mistakes]. So, it might be that I was providing some data to the CEO or and I'm like "oh, of all the people to get it wrong in front of".... So, for HD2 getting things wrong in front of staff and the CEO created negative feelings of anxiety.

HD3 also shared the negative and demotivating aspects of anxieties at work, stating:

It's a bit like banging your head on a wall isn't it, once you've done it for a certain number of times, you stop doing it cos it hurts. So, if you, if you're trying to move something forward and you keep getting told no, we're not going to change, you

know you're slowing us down, then you just think, "well OK I won't bother then," there's no point I'll get on and do something else....

HD2 also discussed how a tense atmosphere at work created anxieties and demotivated staff:

So, it's more about shortness, people not responding or not responding in a friendly manner, just very tense atmosphere. I think it is really difficult in a small business because such a lot rides on so few people that the pressure's so much worse.

This explanation of a tense atmosphere can be perceived as an organizational mood or climate as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

5.9 Summary of the Chapter and Addressing the Research Questions

In this chapter, the findings from the phase 3 data have shown rich interpretations of anxiety experienced at all levels at the entrepreneurial SME case study organization. By using the process of qualitative content analysis, the data from the SME case study were analysed culminating in the emergence of 41 categories and 11 themes which emanated from the open coding of participants' words and statements. As this study is influenced by the qualitative philosophies of interpretivism and social constructionism, the rich individual interpretations and socially constructed explanations provided by participants were used to evidence the categories and themes. The findings show that the categories and themes of anxiety for the SME case study organization addresses the three research questions and are illustrated from the macro (organizational), meso (social, group, team) and micro(individual, personal) levels. The findings show that anxiety is cognitively, socially constructed (French & Vince, 1999; Lewis and Smith, 2011; Vince & Broussine, 1996) with physical and emotional experiences linked to the anxieties. Anxiety is a social emotion and participants use social defence mechanism against anxiety (Armstrong & Ruskin, 2015; Long, 2006). The findings also show that anxieties existed at the organizational level due to the nature of the SME and causes of anxiety. The findings show that anxiety is perceived in a positive and negative way with paradoxical tensions (Lewis & Smith, 2011). The following Table 5.6 below illustrate how the themes and relation

levels begin to address the research questions:

Research Questions	Case Study- Phase Three Themes	Relational Levels
RQ1. What is meant by the emotion of “anxiety” for SME entrepreneurs/business owners and staff in an entrepreneurial SME?	Meanings given to anxiety	Organizational, social and personal
RQ2. How are the feelings and experiences of “anxiety” interpreted by entrepreneurial SMEs?	Experiences of anxiety The personal challenges of anxiety	Social and personal
RQ3. How is “anxiety” manifested at the different relational levels—namely micro (entrepreneur, personal, individual), meso (interpersonal, team, group) and macro (organizational)—within a case study medium-sized entrepreneurial SME?	Causes of Anxiety Nature of anxiety in enterprises Anxiety is socially embedded Communication of anxieties Sense of Others’ Anxieties Anxiety caused by (entrepreneurial) leadership Defences Against Anxiety The positive and negative effects of anxiety	Organizational, social and personal

Table 5.8 How the phase three themes and relational levels address the research questions

In the next chapter, the key themes from all three phases of the data analysis as provided in Chapters 4 and 5 will be discussed with reference to the academic literature and an analysis of how the research questions are answered.

CHAPTER 6:

DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the themes from the findings from Chapters 4 and 5, with an analysis on how the findings and themes provide insight into the literature as discussed in Chapter 2 and answers the research questions. In section 6.2, comparisons of the findings from the three phases of data collection are discussed with an analysis of the similarities and differences between the themes from each phase. In section 6.3, an overview is provided to show the link between key themes from the literature and the themes from the findings. The focus here is to illustrate the identified gaps between the themes from the findings and the literature themes. In section 6.4, a discussion on the meanings of anxiety is covered. A discussion and analysis on the multi-level dimensions of anxiety is in section 6.5. An analysis of anxiety as a personal (micro level) emotion is made in section 6.6, followed by a discussion of anxiety as a social emotion (meso level) in section 6.7 and anxiety as an organizational emotion (macro level) emotion is discussed in section 6.8. Section 6.9 focuses on the impact of entrepreneur decisions and anxiety. In section 6.10, the positive and negative effects of anxiety are discussed and in section 6.11, the need to use a paradoxical lens is proposed, considering the inherent contradictions and tensions of anxiety. Finally, sections 6.12 evidences how the research questions were answered and 6.13 provides a summary respectively. Table 6.1 below is a list of the topics discussed in this Chapter.

6.2 Comparing the themes from all three phases
6.3 Comparing the themes from the findings and literature
6.4 Meanings of anxiety and answer to RQ1
6.5 Multi-level dimensions of anxiety
6.6 -6.8 Micro, Meso and Macro levels of anxiety

6.9 Entrepreneurial decision making and anxiety
6.10 Positive and negative anxiety
6.11 Using a paradoxical Lens
6.12 How the research questions were answered
6.13 Summary of the Chapter

Table 6.1 Summary of the Chapter 6 structure

6.2 Comparing the Themes/Findings from the Three Phases

A qualitative research strategy which adopts a multi-level (Shephard, 2011) and cross level approach (Gerring, 2006) was conducted in the three phases of data collection from a cross section of SME entrepreneurs/business owners and an entrepreneurial SME case study organization. The case study (Yin, 2003) design was deemed suitable, as it has been used in the study of entrepreneurial emotion (Aramand & Valliere, 2012; Laaksonen et al., 2011; Youcef et al., 2015). Denzin (1978, 2012) and Patton (1999) stated that triangulation allows for the examination of the consistency of different data sources from within the same method (see section 3.9 of Chapter 3). In this study, with the use of qualitative methods, the findings show that sources triangulation has been achieved through the three phases of data collection and analysis from the focus group of SME Entrepreneurs and Business Owners (EBOs), the one-on-one semi-structured interviews of SME EBOs, the interviews with entrepreneurial leaders in the SME organization, staff interviews, completed questionnaires and focus group data from the SME organization. All these sources also make this a common, unique and longitudinal case study (Yin, 1994) as discussed in section 3.7 of Chapter 3.

Using the process of qualitative content analysis (Given, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2015; King, 2004; Schrier, 2013), key categories and themes were identified over the three phases of data collection and presented in the findings in Chapters 4 and 5. This section provides a summary of the findings from each phase with a comparison made of the similarities and the key differences of the themes from each phase. Table 6.2 below shows the themes from the three phases of the study and the gaps where themes are not shared across the three phases:

Themes from Phase 1	Themes from Phase 2	Themes from Phase 3- Case Study
Meanings given to anxiety	Meanings given to anxiety	Meanings given to anxiety
The nature of anxieties for SMEs	The nature of anxieties for SMEs	Nature of anxiety in enterprises
	Experiences of anxiety for SME EBOs	Experiences of anxiety
Causes of anxiety for SME entrepreneurs	Causes of Anxiety for SME EBOs	Causes of anxiety
Entrepreneur decision-making and anxiety		
		Anxiety is socially embedded
Entrepreneurs' defences against anxiety	EBO's defences against anxiety	Defences against anxiety
		Communication of anxieties
	Entrepreneurs' sense of others' anxieties	Sense of others' anxieties
	Anxiety and (entrepreneurial) leadership	Anxiety caused by (entrepreneurial) leadership
The personal challenges of anxiety for entrepreneurs	The personal challenges of anxiety for entrepreneurs	The personal challenges of anxiety
	Anxiety and excitement: The positive and negative effects of anxiety	The positive and negative effects of anxiety

Table 6.2: The themes from the three phases of the study

The themes found in the three phases of data analysis showed some similarities and distinctions. As illustrated in Table 6.2 above, the themes present in the findings of all three phases of the study are meanings of anxiety, the nature of anxiety in SMEs, causes of anxiety, defences against anxiety and the personal challenges of anxiety. Although these themes were present in all three phases, there were some differences for each phase. For example, the categories relevant for the theme of *causes of anxiety* were fewer in the phase one and phase two findings when compared with the phase three case study categories. In the phase one findings, four categories were linked to the theme of causes of anxiety (see section 4.2 in Chapter 4) from the pilot focus group of SME EBOs. In the phase two findings, six categories were linked to the causes of anxiety from the findings of the semi-structured interviews with EBOs (see sections 4.4 and 4.5 in Chapter 4). Whereas, in the phase three findings, eleven categories were linked to the causes of anxiety for the case study entrepreneurial SME organization (see section 5.5 of Chapter 5). The differences between the categories for the theme (*causes of anxiety*) are discussed further in section 6.6 below.

Again, *entrepreneur decision-making and anxiety* is a theme in phase one only but discussions about anxiety and decision-making falls across some of the themes in the phase two and in phase three findings. Table 6.2 shows that *experiences of anxiety* are themes in phases two and three but not in phase one. However, experiences of anxiety are reflected in the discussions on personal challenges and other themes in the phase one findings.

Table 6.2 shows that the themes of *anxiety being socially embedded* in SMEs and *communication of anxiety* were present in the phase three findings, but not in the phase one and phase two findings. The *sensing of other's anxiety* is a theme not presented in the phase one findings but identified in phases two and three. A third theme referred to as *anxiety and excitement: the positive and negative effects of anxiety* is also not shown in phase one but present in the phase two and three findings.

The main explanations for the variations in themes are due to the differences in participants and sources of data over the three phases. The phase one pilot focus group involved eight EBOs, the phase two data source involved in-depth semi structured interviews of twelve EBOs, of which only four were from the original pilot focus group. The phase three data collection included thirty-five participants from all

levels of the entrepreneurial SME organization who were either interviewed, took part in a focus group or completed a questionnaire.

Another reason for the differences is that, the pilot EBO focus group only had two major questions for discussion, whereas, the one-to-one semi-structured interviews of all participants from phases two and three, and staff focus group from phase three allowed for a more in-depth explanations and descriptions of participant experiences. This was guided using a detailed questionnaire and interviewer questioning. However, the fourteen anonymously completed questionnaires by staff who did not want to be interviewed from phase three also lacked in-depth descriptions.

See Appendix (I) which is an excel spreadsheet of the data analysis and sources map which contains the codes of all the sources from all three phases, their links to some of the broad categories and themes from the findings. Where participants provided a response to a category/theme, this is marked with a small x. Whereas, if there was no response by participants, it is highlighted in grey. The map provides the evidence of data saturation (Saunders et al., 2017) in the findings.

6.3 How the Findings and Themes Compare with the Literature Themes

This section focuses on how the findings and themes provide insight into the literature and contrast with the literature. The key themes that were identified from the literature covered various points ranging from the nature of small enterprises, emotions in organisations, entrepreneurship and emotions, and the positive and negative experiences of emotions for entrepreneurs and organisations. A gap was identified in the literature in relation to entrepreneurship and anxiety, especially in the context of SMEs. The emergent themes from the literature and the themes from the findings are illustrated in Table 6.3 below:

Topic/ Section in the literature review -Chapter 2	Themes from the literature	Themes from findings in Chapters 4 and 5
Emotions in Organizations/ Section 2.5	Emotions are socially constructed, forms part of the institutional processes, collective in nature, multi-level dimensions	Experiences of anxiety (Expands literature)
Anxiety in organizations/ Section 2.6	Social defences for organizations	Social defences against anxiety (Expands literature)
Entrepreneurship and Emotions/ Section 2.7	Affect, cognition, socially embedded in entrepreneurship	Anxiety is socially embedded in entrepreneurial SMEs
Anxiety and Entrepreneurship / Section 2.8	Limited literature – Anxiety interchanged with fear, failure, negative emotion	Meanings given to anxiety (Expands literature)
SMEs and their nature / Section 2.11	Nature of the enterprise, “condition of smallness,” size of SMEs, family firms, paradox	Nature of anxiety in SMEs (Expands literature)
Paradox in organizations/ positive and negative emotions Section 2.10	Paradox lens applied to tensions and contradictions, social defences	The positive and negative effects of anxiety (Expands literature)
		Causes of Anxiety
		Anxiety caused by (entrepreneurial) leadership
		Entrepreneur decision making and anxiety
		Communication of anxieties
		Sense of others’ Anxieties
		The personal challenges of anxiety

Table 6.3: Themes from the literature review and findings with the gaps

Table 6.3 illustrates in the first and second columns, the key topics and themes discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2. The academic sources for each theme of the literature is provided as in section 2.12 of Chapter 2. The themes from the findings discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 are shown in the third column. The table shows that six themes, namely; causes of anxiety, anxiety caused by entrepreneurial leadership, entrepreneur decision-making and anxiety, communication of anxiety, sensing others' anxiety and personal challenges of anxiety were little researched in the literature and this study provides new insights in these areas.

The themes from the findings of this study broadens the current literature on emotions in organizations (Ashkanasy, 2003; Baron, 2008; Fineman, 2008; Shephard 2011; Zerbe, Hartel & Ashkanasy, 2015) and emotions in entrepreneurship (Baron, 2008; Cardon et al., 2009; Delgado Garcia et al., 2015; Fischer et al., 2013; Goss, 2008) by its emphasis on the emotion of anxiety in the context of entrepreneurial SMEs by understanding the perceptions, experiences, causes, tensions and effects of anxiety. This is an area which has not received attention in the academic literature and contributes to the growing focus on emotions in entrepreneurial research (Allen et al., 2017).

Generally, the literature on emotions in organizations and entrepreneurship focuses mainly on emotions such as passion (Cardon et al., 2012; Foo, 2009; Chen et al., 2009). Another popular emotion covered in the literature on entrepreneurship is fear; for example, fear of failure (Isenberg, 2011; Shepard et al., 2011). As shown in section 2.7 in Chapter 2, the emotions of fear and anxiety are terms that have been "used interchangeably to describe the same psychological phenomenon" (Cacciotti and Hayton, 2015: p. 168). This study specifically provides insights and contributes to the literature by its focus on anxiety and entrepreneurship in the context of SMEs.

A qualitative research strategy was adopted for this study (see section 3.2 of Chapter 3) which allowed for an exploration of participants' meanings and interpretations of anxiety. The key findings were that anxiety is an emotion which is interpreted and described using diverse words. The participants provided rich definitions of the emotion of anxiety in the context of an entrepreneurial SME, or as an entrepreneur/business owner in the SME context. The findings show how respondents express their feelings from both physical and emotional perspectives. The theme of meanings of

anxiety is discussed further in section 6.4 below. Themes identified from the research findings were in relation to personal experiences of anxiety in SMEs and to how anxiety is perceived as a social emotion. The findings show that anxiety exists as a social emotion in the entrepreneurial SME context. The literature shows how emotion is socially constructed and embedded in entrepreneurship (Doern & Goss 2012; Douglas Creed et al., 2013; Goss, 2008). This study expands the literature through its findings that anxiety in entrepreneurial SMEs is a socially embedded emotion. See section 6.7 below for an elaboration.

The findings also support the literature that suggest that anxiety require social defence mechanisms in organizations (French & Vince, 1999; Jacques, 1955; Krantz, 2010; Long, 2006; Menzies Lyth, 1960) Social defences existed at the individual, team and organizational level of the participant SME case study organization and for SME entrepreneurs and business owners. The findings show that anxiety is an emotion with very strong relational aspects which support and undermine the individual and collective work of entrepreneurs and staff in the case study SME organization. This topic is further explored in section 6.7.1 below.

This study is broadening research by providing insights into the interplay between the positive and negative aspects of anxiety in entrepreneurial SMEs. A key contribution to the literature from the findings is the explanations of the tensions and contradictions induced by or inducing positive and negative emotions of anxiety at micro, meso and macro levels. Section 2.10 of the literature review Chapter 2 extensively covers the use of a paradoxical perspective to understand the tensions within organisations (Ingram et al., 2014; Schad et al., 2016; Smith and Berg, 1987; Smith & Lewis, 2011; Tian & Smith, 2014). However, there has been a gap in understanding these paradoxical tensions in the context of entrepreneurial SMEs. The findings from this study sharpens the focus (Schad et al., 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011) and bring a contribution in relation to entrepreneurial anxiety in the SME context.

Gaps in the literature are revealed from the findings of this study. First, the fact that the literature itself has not been expanded enough to provide academic research on the emotion of anxiety and entrepreneurship is a key point (Allen, et al., 2017). In addition, the findings revealed themes not existing in the literature. These themes include causes of anxiety for entrepreneurial SMEs, especially anxiety caused by the

entrepreneurial leadership, even in relation to how their decisions might cause anxiety. The other key themes which were identified as showing gaps in the literature were social and personal level themes such as communication/sharing of anxieties, the sense of other's anxieties, and the personal challenges of anxiety for SME entrepreneurs and staff from the entrepreneurial SME organization.

Particularly, the sense of others' anxiety was a key theme that emerged from phase two and three of the findings. Participants expressed their level of awareness of others' anxiety and how they responded. Opinions were conflicting, as some participants were not aware of the anxiety of others, whereas some were aware, for example, the anxieties linked to redundancies/restructuring in the entrepreneurial SME. The majority of staff that completed the questionnaire showed a lack of awareness of the anxiety of others, as they provided a "don't know" answer to the question. Most of the SME entrepreneurs from the phase two findings also did not show an awareness of others' anxiety during the interviews.

Communication of anxiety was another theme identified in the findings, mainly from phase three of the findings but not dealt with in the literature. However, some of the SME entrepreneurs from the phase two findings also indicated that they were not happy to talk to their staff about business challenges. The themes of communicating anxieties with line managers, subordinates, senior management, inter-team and leadership communication challenges, were discussed by the participants in detail in Chapter 5. It was shown that leaders and managers were reluctant to communicate their anxieties about the work and business. Staff from the entrepreneurial SME organization provided mixed responses in terms of communication with line managers, heads of department and the leadership team. However, some felt that that senior managers were good at communicating about the business challenges and their anxieties, whereas others felt that the senior managers and leaders were not good at doing so. For example, participant, IT1 complained that senior managers did not clearly communicate about the restructuring, which caused anxieties for certain members of staff. Also, some participants indicated that they were not happy with communicating with their line managers, whilst others said that they were. This revealed that the level and frequency of communication relied on the relationships that leaders and managers had with their staff members.

Another key theme from phase three of the findings was the entrepreneurial leaders' actions and leadership style. The actions of senior management were a key cause of anxiety for staff in the entrepreneurial SME organisation. Staff dealt with it differently, as some saw the leadership style and actions as restrictive to their department and work, whereas others saw it as inevitable due to the needs of the business. Some heads of department who were not in the executive committee felt that sometimes a member of the executive team was the person, due to their leadership style, causing them and others in the organization the anxieties. These themes reveal that the issues of self-awareness, empathy, communication and leadership style were anxiety inducing situations that were important for entrepreneurial SMEs. Also, the themes reveal the relational and socially constructed anxieties. So, these social level issues in SMEs can help social actors understand how they can respond to relational and socially constructed anxiety in entrepreneurship and perhaps provide positive defence mechanisms to deal with them (Lewis & Smith, 2011).

6.4 Meanings of Anxiety and Answers to RQ1

To understand how anxiety is manifested as a multi-dimensional emotion in SMEs, it is necessary to first understand the meanings of anxiety. Indeed, the first research question (RQ1) and objective (RO1) in this study (see section 1.2 in Chapter 1) are focused on finding out the meanings/definitions of anxiety given by participants from the qualitative data. From the findings, comparisons can be found between the definition of anxiety given by the participants and that found in the literature. However, this study extends the literature by providing a meaningful definition of anxiety from the perspectives of the participants in the SME context.

In section 1.3.4 of Chapter 1, anxiety is defined as fear, nervousness, or discomfort induced by different situations. According to Salecl, (2004 p.18) "Anxiety is fear without an object. Something to be avoided or controlled as it 'incites the feeling of being uncomfortable' and the generally accepted definition of anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome." This general definition of anxiety corresponds with the definition of state-trait anxiety as discussed in section 2.4 of Chapter 2. As previously discussed in section 2.4, the State -Trait Inventory is a commonly used clinical measure of trait

and state anxiety (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983). It is a test/questionnaire which uses a point scale that shows how strong a person's feelings of anxiety are. In that test, state anxiety items include statements such as: "I am tense"; "I am worried"; "I feel calm"; "I feel secure." Trait anxiety items include statements such as: "I worry too much"; "I am content"; "I am a steady person." (American Psychology Association, 2017)

In a similar way, the key words the participants from all three phases of the findings used to define anxiety were mainly "worry," "fear," "stress," "nervous," "desperate," and "uncertainty." Most participants from the three phases of this study expressed state anxiety linked statements. Three participants from the SME case study organisation, namely SM2, IT1 and STF4, presented trait anxiety responses. However, from the interviews, participants used richer and more varied definitions of anxiety. When some participants gave descriptions of their understanding of anxiety, they linked anxiety to both physical and emotional definitions and experiences. The physical elements of the emotion of anxiety were expressed with statements such as "I get really tired"; "I can't sleep"; "I'm frustrated"; "My head was buzzing"; "It gets to my chest"; "I dream about it"; "I get sick." Therefore, whilst the rich definitions mainly include state anxiety definitions, there were also elements of trait anxiety in the definitions given by the participants in the findings such as "I worry too much" or "I have had a panic attack." However, unlike the clinical definitions of anxiety, the definitions given by participants from the study were mainly in the context of the SMEs, their work and entrepreneurial issues.

6.5 Multi-Level Dimensions of Anxiety and Answers to RQ2/ RQ3

The second and third research questions (RQ2 and RQ3) and objectives (RO2 and RO3) in this study (see Section 1.2 in Chapter 1) are aimed at finding out how anxiety is interpreted and manifested in SMEs and at the micro (personal, individual), meso (social, group, team) and macro (organizational, collective) levels. Hartel, Ashkanasy and Zerbe (2014) suggested that emotion is a deeply embedded component of the organizational fabric apparent at all levels of organizing at the individual level, expressed in interpersonal exchanges and in groups, and across the organization. Ashkanasy (2003) advocated the use of a multi-level perspective for a deeper

understanding of emotions in organisations. Various studies as discussed in Chapter 2 made it clear that individual, team, group and organisational levels of emotion exist (Delgado Garcia et al., 2015; Douglas Creed et al., 2014; Goss, 2005). Also, a multi-level approach to research has been adopted in subjects including managers and teams (Bashshur, Hernández & González-Romá, 2011), team design and stress (Cruz & Pil, 2011), and transformational leadership (Charbonnier-Voirin, El Akremi & Vandenberghe, 2010; Korek, Felfe & Zaepernick-Rothe, 2010). However, there is a gap in the literature, as the focus has been on emotions in general and not on anxiety. This study sharpens the focus on anxiety and the findings show how anxiety is manifested as a multi-level emotion in the SME entrepreneurial context.

Ashkanasy and Ashton- James (2004) illustrated five levels of emotions existing in the organisational context in their study of positive emotions. These five levels have been adapted to this study. The Level 1 emotion is described as the neuropsychological and cognitive, within-person level of analysis and Level 2 is explained as the individual differences in between-persons level of analysis. In this study, personal/individual level anxiety are referred to as the personal feelings, experiences and personal challenges of anxiety for the SME entrepreneurs and staff in the entrepreneurial SME. This is similar to the level 1 (within-person) analysis and level 2 (between person) analysis. The Level 3 emotion is described as communication of [positive] emotion at the dyadic (relationships) level of analysis, and Level 4 is emotion at the group level of analysis (Ashkanasy and Ashton- James (2004)). In this study, the meso level anxiety is shown as a social emotion that exists at the team, group or department level and similar to the level 3 and 4 analysis. The Level 5 emotion refers to emotional climate at the organizational level of analysis. Likewise, in this study, the macro/organizational level of anxiety is referred to as the collective emotion of the organization and adopts this notion of organizational climate (Ashkanasy et al., 2000; Reichers & Schneider, 1990).

The findings from the focus group of SME entrepreneurs (phase one), one-on-one interviews with the SME entrepreneurs (phase two) and the in-depth case study of an entrepreneurial SME organisation (phase three) reveal the cross-level (Gerring, 2006) and multi-level (Shephard 2011) elements of anxiety. For example, using anxieties linked to risks; at the organizational level, the entrepreneur and SME had to operate between a high-risk strategy with a potentially high reward and a low risk strategy with

less potential reward which caused anxieties for the organization collectively. At a social level, there is the tension of openness and sharing of risks, especially financial risks, as opposed to not sharing in order to reduce the anxieties and protect reputation. The awareness of the financial challenges, although not often shared with the staff members of the SME organization, created socially related anxieties when redundancies were taking place. This, for example, led to the creation of social defences against the tensions and anxiety created at the social level. At a personal level, the physical, emotional, and personal challenges of anxiety are expressed through contradictions as a positive and negative emotion. Table 6.4 shows how the themes from the three phases are grouped into their relational levels.

Levels	Themes from phases
Organizational (macro), Social (meso) and Personal (micro)	Meanings given to anxiety, Entrepreneur decision making and anxiety The positive and negative effects of anxiety
Organizational/Macro	Nature of anxiety for SMEs
Organizational/Macro/Social	Causes of Anxiety
Social/Group/Meso	Anxiety caused by (entrepreneurial) leadership
Social/Group/Meso	Anxiety is socially embedded
Social/Group/Meso	Defences against anxiety
Social/Group/Meso	Communication of anxieties
Social/Group/Meso	Sense of others' anxieties
Persona/Micro	The personal challenges of anxiety Experiences of anxiety

Table 6.4: Themes from the study are grouped into their relational levels.

The three themes that fall into all three levels are meanings of anxiety, entrepreneur decision making and anxiety, and positive and negative effects of anxiety. The nature of anxiety for SMEs and causes of anxiety are deemed mainly as organizational level factors. However, causes of anxiety also possess a social dimension. Indeed, most of the themes (anxiety caused by entrepreneurial leadership, anxiety is socially embedded, defences against anxiety, communication of anxieties, sense of others' anxieties) all fall into the social/group level. Two themes, namely the personal experiences and challenges of anxiety, mainly fall into the personal level. However, it should be noted that these themes are fluid, and, in some cases, some themes could be on other levels. For example, defences against anxiety could be at all three levels. Anxiety as a personal, social and organizational emotion is discussed in Sections 6.6, 6.7 and 6.8 respectively in view of the literature and findings.

6.6 Anxiety is a Personal Emotion-Micro Level

This section analyses how the findings on anxiety as a personal emotion support and differ from the literature. An analysis and discussion of the differences in the themes from the three phases are also discussed. From the three phases of data analysis and as shown in Chapters 4 and 5, anxiety can be expressed as a personal emotion in the context of entrepreneurial SMEs. Participants used cognitive, emotional and physical experiences to provide their own definitions of anxiety. This is aligned with the literature as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 that provide explanations of the cognitive, feelings and experiences of anxiety and emotions (Spielberger & Reihseiser 2009; Salecl, 2004; Lambie & Marcel, 2002; Barrett et al., 2007).

The SME entrepreneurs and participants from the entrepreneurial SME organization expressed personal experiences and challenges of anxiety. This is an area where there has been limited academic research (Allen et al., 2017). As a result, the findings from this study have shed some light on the personal level experiences of anxiety as a physical and emotional experience for SME entrepreneurs. The theme of the personal challenges of anxiety illustrates what is meant by anxiety as a personal emotion.

The findings from phase one as discussed in Chapter 4 indicated that the personal challenges for SME entrepreneurs included; age, gender related issues, personality type, leadership style, lack of business/entrepreneurial skills. These categories were identified by the pilot focus group participants as key issues inducing anxiety for SME entrepreneurs and business owners.

From the phase two findings, the in-depth one-on-one semi-structured interviews provided a deeper narrative of the personal challenges of anxiety for SME entrepreneurs, and the list of categories which were illustrated in Chapter 4 were anxieties about responsibilities and expectations, personal and physical consequences of anxiety. In addition to discussing the personal and physical challenges of anxiety, participants also discussed how anxiety motivated and demotivated them.

From the phase three case study entrepreneurial SME findings, in addition to the physical and emotional experiences of anxiety, the personal challenges of anxiety were categorised as the entrepreneurial leaders' anxiety, management anxiety, staff member anxiety, anxieties about role responsibilities and expectations, the personal and physical consequences of anxiety.

Note that the theme; *positive and negative* effects of anxiety had not only personal, but social and organizational consequences across the SME organization. Overall, the categories and themes from all three phases of the findings as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 show that there were individual manifestations of anxiety and as such, people talked about their experiences of anxiety induced by their roles as entrepreneurs and/or staff members in the case study entrepreneurial SME. For instance, some participants in the pilot focus group of the SME entrepreneurs talked about their personality traits having an impact on how they viewed and experienced anxiety. Staff from the focus group SME case study organization also shared the challenges of their workload and role in a fast moving and growing SME. The theme of personal challenges of anxiety is in relation to the physical as well as the emotional challenges of anxiety as expressed by participants from all phases of the study. It is also linked to the themes from the literature on the tensions and contradictions of anxiety (Cacciotti & Hayton, 2015; Kashdan & Bren 2008; Krantz, 2010; Lewis & Smith, 2014; Long, 2006; Vince & Saleem, 2004).

6.7 Anxiety is a Social Emotion- Meso Level

This section analyses how the findings on anxiety as a social emotion support and differ from the literature and analyses the differences in the themes from the three phases. The findings are consistent with the research discussed in section 2.7 of Chapter 2 that shows that anxiety is a social emotion (Douglas Creed et al., 2014) created by social experiences linked to relationships with others in the team and organization, to partnerships, external factors, risks and growth. A key finding from the literature was that emotion/affect (Harte, Ashkanasy & Zerbe, 2014) was a social emotion embedded in entrepreneurship (Delgado-Garcia et al., 2015). Also, the literature showed how passion was an emotion embedded in entrepreneurship (Cardon et al., 2012). Anxiety is an emotion which has been neglected in the literature on entrepreneurship and emotion (Allen et al., 2017). However, this study shows that anxiety, like passion, is also embedded in entrepreneurial SMEs. Anxieties are relationally and socially constructed (French & Vince, 1999; Long, 2006; Vince & Broussine, 1996; Vince & Saleem, 2004).

In the phase two and three findings, decision-making, and denial of anxiety were deemed to be social level issues. However, from the findings in phases two and three, the key categories identified as issues relevant to anxiety as a social emotion were that anxiety is socially embedded, there were issues in relation to the communication of anxieties, sensing others' anxieties, anxiety caused by (entrepreneurial) leadership and the social defences against anxiety. The anxieties caused by failure of projects, redundancies and restructuring of the SME organization created socially constructed responses which included social defences. The anxieties of the entrepreneurial leader and tensions about entrepreneurial decisions also created socially constructed and group (Gergen 2005; Gergen & Gergen 2010; Young & Collin, 2004), anxieties. These anxieties are inherent in the entrepreneurial process which requires SME entrepreneurs to take risks and be innovative. The sense of others' anxieties and communication of anxieties as discussed earlier in section 6.3 are all concerned with social/group relationships and linked to the literature which shows how emotions have intra-personal manifestations (Biniari 2012; Doern & Goss, 2012; Goss, 2005). Anxiety as a social emotion can also be seen from participants' explanations of the causes of anxiety such as money, risks and people's performance issues. However, as the

causes of anxiety often had organizational wide consequences, they have been placed as an organizational level theme as discussed in 6.8 below. The social defences against anxiety in organisations were evident both in the literature and in the findings of this study.

6.7 1 Anxiety and social defence

The literature on social defences against anxiety in organisations has been explored in detail in Section 2.6 of Chapter 2 (Bion, 1961; French & Vince, 1999; Jacques, 1955; Menzies Lyth, 1960). The literature shows that social defences used against anxiety are (largely) unconscious emotional dynamics that become attached to structures, practices, policies and authority relations, and are used for collectively managing anxiety (Crane, 1980; Krantz, 2010 Long, 2006;). Hindelwood and Skogstad (2000) provided ways of observing organizational dynamics such as culture and the use of social defences as a mechanism of collective defence. Kets De Vries (2004) also discussed the concept of social defences, which was described as a system of relationships (reflected in the organizational or social structure) constructed to help people deal with persecutory and depressive anxiety.

The theme of defences against anxiety found in the research data from the SME entrepreneurs and business owners (Chapter 4) entrepreneurial SME organization (Chapter 5) included inter alia; i) *rationalization* as often, there was a need by the SME entrepreneurs to rationalise the issues in order to protect the reputation of the leadership and /or organization, ii) *protection* of individual and team members by not sharing certain information, iii) *professionalism* by wearing professional masks to show confidence despite being anxious , iv) *splitting work and family* by the separation of work and family life, v) creating a sense of a *common purpose* through comments like “ we are like a family”, vi) the *denial of anxiety*, vii) using *age* and viii) *gendered stereotypes*.

For the SME entrepreneurs and senior management within the entrepreneurial SME, social defences were used to portray an image of professionalism, not share too much information about challenges of the business, or “split home and family life away from work life.” This is also evidenced by the shared experiences and feelings from the

focus groups both in phase one and phase three of the study. Participants in the focus groups often agreed that they were all sharing similar experiences or are in it together. For instance, statements like “we are part of the same company and we want to make things work” were expressed by participants in the phase three focus group of the entrepreneurial SME organization.

The interviews from phases two and three data showed a variety of different individual defences. These included: attempts to deny and rationalize away anxiety or attempts to protect staff from anxiety. For instance, a good example from the phase three findings was the fact that the SME entrepreneurial organisation introduced a stress management programme to help staff deal with their anxieties and stress due to the changes in the organization. This was an example where the organization is trying to protect staff and itself against anxiety and stress. Krantz (2010) discussed the concept of social defences, showing how a systematic analysis of the literature on social defences over the last few years shows the existence of this phenomenon in institutions and forms part of the institutional process. The whole concept of social defences is really concerned with how organisations or social structures are constructed to help people deal with the challenges of anxiety, as in the example of the stress management programme in the entrepreneurial SME organization. Menzies Lyth (1960) referred to the existence of social defences within organisations in the nursing sector, and how these defences were used to create and sustain organisations. It was shown in the literature review that social defence is used to help organisations and their members to work in the anxiety provoking situations of change.

The literature showed that loss of social defences would lead to overwhelming anxieties. However, on the contrary, “problems arise when the defence system itself works against engaging the task” (Long, 2006, p.284). The phase three findings show how when entrepreneurial leaders tried to protect staff by not clearly sharing information, made certain decisions such as expand to new countries, start risky projects to appease business partners or restructure the organization, it sometimes backfired and created more anxieties for themselves and staff.

6.8 Anxiety is an Organizational Emotion for SMEs- Macro Level

A key theme which is widely accepted in the literature was that anxiety forms part of the institutional process (Cooper et al., 2001 James & Clark, 2002, Voronov & Vince, 2012; Vince & Mazon, 2014) and inherent in organizations. In organizations, there is often a need to develop the ability to quickly embed decisions, or to rapidly make changes. However, the prospect of change can be accompanied by frightening emotional experiences coming to the surface (Cacciotti & Hayton, 2015). This, in turn, stimulates resistance to change and offers insight into why attempts at change may fail despite how sensible they might seem at the time. See section (2.6) in the literature review Chapter 2 for the discussion on anxiety as an organizational emotion. The findings from this study are consistent with past research suggesting that anxiety is an organizational emotion but provides a contextual emphasis, by sharpening the focus on entrepreneurial SMEs due to the gap in the literature (Allen et al., 2017)

In the phase one, two, and three findings, the themes of the *nature of SMEs* and the *causes of anxiety* are expressed as organizational level factors. These themes, which are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, show a collective organizational manifestation of anxiety (Fineman 2000, 2003; Ashkanasy, 2003; Voronov & Vince, 2012). For example, in the context of the entrepreneurial SME, where there was a culture of working on very tight work deadlines, constant pressures created by rapid changes, uncertainties about growth and expansion caused collective, organizational anxieties. The organizational level anxieties were linked to the nature of anxieties in enterprises as well as the specific issues linked to SMEs such as size and the volatile nature of an entrepreneurial SME. The anxiety inducing, and anxiety induced experiences of participants showed how these anxieties were “rife with tensions” (Smith & Lewis, 2014 p. 127) with positive and negative consequences at the organisational levels. The two organizational level themes from the findings will now be compared and discussed in detail in Sections 6.8.1 and 6.8.2 below.

6.8.1 Causes of anxiety

This section focuses on the similarities and differences in the findings on the theme of causes of anxiety from the three phases of this study. This theme falls under the relational heading of anxiety as an organizational level emotion, shared collectively by the organization (Ashkanasy, 2003; Ashkanasy & Ashton James, 2004; Goss, 2005; Hartel, Ashkanasy & Zerbe, 2014; Vince & Brousinne, 1996; Vince & Mazen, 2014; Vince & Saleem, 2004; Vince 2018). However, the literature is expanded by this study as it provides detailed findings on the causes of anxiety in the SME context.

From the phase one findings, four categories were identified as the factors causing anxieties for SME entrepreneurs and discussed in Chapter 4 namely: i) finance related anxieties, ii) pipeline concerns, iii) business relationships, reputation and trust, and iv) workload and external pressures. The phase two findings provided six factors for the causes of anxiety for SME entrepreneurs namely: i) anxiety about money, ii) anxiety about winning work/ contracts, iii) anxiety arising from risk, iv) anxiety over people and performance, v) anxiety about the client, and vi) anxieties from the external environment. The phase three findings identified eleven factors for the causes of anxiety for the case study SME organizations which were; executive team decisions causing anxiety, anxiety about finances for the SME, anxiety about winning work/ contracts, risks linked to expanding to developing countries, anxiety over people and performance, anxiety about the client, anxieties about recruiting staff overseas, anxieties about fast growth and resources, anxieties from the external environment, tight deadlines and failure of projects. Therefore, from all the three phases of the study, the findings show that issues such as finances, contracts, clients, business relationships/partnerships, projects, people, performance, work deadlines, expansion, fast growth and external pressures were the key factors causing organizational anxieties for SME entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurial SME organization.

The category of *executive team decisions causing anxiety* was placed as a category in phase three under the theme of *causes of anxiety* because participants explained how some executive decisions such as the restructuring of the organization caused them anxieties. In contrast, *making decisions* (see section 6.8.2 below) was placed as a category under the nature of anxieties for SMEs in the phase two findings because

the participants discussed the issue of decision making and its consequences in the generic context of being an SME entrepreneur. However, in the phase one findings, entrepreneur decision-making was considered a theme on its own because it was prominently discussed by the participants in the phase one pilot study, but not prominently in phases two and three. In the phase three findings, making some specific decisions such as the recruiting of extra staff was shown not to be a worry for staff members but was a worry for the senior management and entrepreneurial leaders of the organization and often expressed as a factor that may or may not cause anxiety. Thus, the role of anxiety in decision making is important for SME entrepreneurs and this issue is discussed separately in Section 6.9 below.

6.8.2 Nature of Anxiety for SMEs

This section focuses on the similarities and differences in the findings on the theme of the nature of anxiety for SMEs from the three phases of this study. First, a key theme that came from the literature was the point that the nature of the enterprise will impact on the emotions of individuals, teams and organisation in SMEs. For example, Anderson and Ullah's (2014) "condition of smallness" shows how the nature and the size of SMEs carries its own unique challenges. Ingram et al. (2014) also discussed the challenges of small family firms. This was confirmed from the phase one pilot focus group findings. There were five categories identified as factors relating to the nature of SMEs from the phase two namely; the benefits and detriments of being small, the tensions of partnerships, a sense of urgency, financial worries and uncertainties and making decisions.

The findings from the phase three case study organization data analysis reveal several factors for the nature of anxiety for SMEs as discussed in Section 5.4 of Chapter 5. The categories suggest that anxiety is an everyday experience for SMEs, the volatile nature of an entrepreneurial SME creates anxieties, the constant sense of urgency, workload pressures, financial worries and uncertainties, restructure of the organisation, size/growth of the SME, partnerships, joint ventures and investors all created anxiety inducing situations for the SME organization at the micro, meso and macro levels.

Note that the themes titled *causes of anxiety* and the *nature of anxieties in enterprises* do overlap and are mainly social and organizational level anxieties. Financial concerns, restructuring, and the volatile nature of entrepreneurial SMEs are discussed in Chapter 5 and can be linked to the themes of the nature of the enterprise and causes of anxiety. Participants at all levels of the SME organisation indicated that the size of the SME, its fast growth, financial worries, restructuring of the organisation, failure of projects, tight deadlines, and investors' decisions were all factors that caused anxiety for them and the organization. These factors were like those found in the SME entrepreneur focus group and interviews discussed in Chapter 4. However, the distinct issues for the entrepreneurial SME organization included issues relating to the entering new markets like India, restructuring of the organization, joint ventures, and investors.

The findings from all three phases of data collection show that anxiety is an everyday experience for SME entrepreneurs due to the nature, size and type of business. All participants confirm that the size of the SME business impacts on the levels of anxiety experienced in relation to issues dealing with change, growth, opportunity seeking, customer relations, partnerships, management and leadership as shown above. Thus, "the condition of smallness" is not only a description of a systemic process in which the general characteristics of small businesses can inhibit their own growth (Anderson & Ullah, 2014). It is also an underlying emotional process informed by the tensions and contradictions that are created within small firms by anxiety inducing conditions.

6.9 Entrepreneur Decision-Making and Anxiety

As explained earlier in section 6.8, entrepreneur decision-making is a separate theme in the phase one findings but falls under the themes of the nature of anxieties for SMEs in the phase two findings and under the theme of the causes of anxiety in the phase three findings as categories. However, it is necessary to give some attention to this topic because anxiety and entrepreneurship decision-making manifested at the personal, social, and organizational levels in different ways and with different emphasis in the findings. Shepherd (2010) conducted a review of the benefits of using multi-level entrepreneurial research for the study of entrepreneurial decision-making. As discussed in section 2.7.1 in the literature review Chapter 2, Shepherd et al.,

(2014), in their review of the literature on entrepreneurial decision-making, acknowledge that entrepreneurial decision-making was a broad topic. However, the literature on emotions and entrepreneurial decision-making is limited but developing. Michl, Welpel, Sporrle, and Picott (2009) discussed the importance of emotions and cognition in the entrepreneurial process, starting with opportunity recognition, opportunity evaluation, decisions to exploit the opportunity, and the initiatives used to start entrepreneurial action. Brundin and Gustafsson (2013) studied SME entrepreneurs' investment decisions and the impact of emotions during periods of uncertainty. They found that the emotions and feelings of self-confidence, challenge, hope and low uncertainty increased investment decisions, whereas the emotions of embarrassment, strain and high uncertainty decreased investment decisions.

The study by Brundin and Gustafsson (2013) in particular revealed how positive and negative emotional situations impact entrepreneurial behaviour and entrepreneurial decision-making. Although the study did not focus on the emotion of anxiety, the findings from phases one, two and three of this study show that the consequences of SME entrepreneur decisions can create anxiety. Entrepreneurs discussed the emotional challenges of making decisions. A good illustration discussed in Chapter 5 is provided with the following statement by an SME entrepreneur who was a participant in the phase two (**P3**) and phase three (**CE1**) findings:

As an SME, you never have more than about 15 months' worth of cash. You've only got this visibility of I've got enough money for 15 months, you are constantly juggling, ok, I need to hire more people because I am winning business, but if I hire more people, that means I am going to spend more cash. How quickly is the revenue? Do I hire more people, or do I not hire more people and therefore, totally just exploding the business because we are not ready for this huge opportunity that we are getting? So, those are the kind of tensions you find in an SME, you want to invest in people, you want to hire more people, you have to hire more people, but you don't want to because you are worried about what's going to happen in March next year.

This participant statement reflects how entrepreneurial SMEs are forced to play a balancing act when choosing between cash flow and making the decision to recruit

staff, and the resulting anxieties this creates for the enterprise at personal, social and organizational levels. It also reveals the contradictions and tension inherent in entrepreneurial SME decisions with negative and positive consequences.

6.10 The Positive and Negative Effects of Anxiety: Contradictions and Tensions

The literature suggests that innovative entrepreneurial behaviour is linked to both positive and negative emotions (Doern & Goss, 2012, 2013; Goss, 2008), and this includes the emotion of anxiety (Rosen 2008). Andries (2011) described negative emotions as unpleasant feelings such as sadness, fear, anger, jealousy etc. Positive emotions are described as pleasant feelings and include examples such as joy, happiness, and enthusiasm. Lindebaum and Jordan (2014) challenge the asymmetrical assumptions of positive and negative emotions and discuss “when it can be good to feel bad and bad to feel good.” The literature shows how negative emotions can have a positive impact and vice versa (Lindebaum & Jordan 2012). Anxiety is a positive and negative emotion (Vince, 2010). According to Rosen (2008), too much and too little anxiety is negative, whereas “just enough” anxiety is positive for the entrepreneur and organization. Hirschhorn and Horowitz (as cited in Armstrong & Ruskin, 2015) also looked at anxiety from a positive perspective.

The findings in this study support the literature by showing that the experiences of entrepreneurship and anxiety do have positive and negative effects for the individual, team and organization. The findings from phase two of this study show how anxiety sometimes motivated enterprise and at other times undermined enterprise (see Chapter 4). The findings from phase three show how participants responded to anxieties differently, sometimes in positive and sometimes in negative ways. Participants mentioned that the nature of the SME, workload pressures, the tight deadlines and their roles, created its own anxieties with positive and negative effects for themselves, their teams and the SME organization (see Chapter 5).

From a personal/individual (micro) perspective, some looked at their experiences as a negative experience, stating, for example, that their role “creates more anxiety,” whilst others looked at their roles from a positive perspective, stating “due to my role,

I can see problems in advance and so [I am] not anxious.” **AD1** felt proud of her achievements despite her anxieties: “No I mean I, I think I felt anxious and I felt pressured but, but when the work is completed on time, and to what I consider a good standard, it makes me feel proud.” **AD1** also provided a positive perspective on the effects of negative work pressure: “Yeah pressure sometimes is good, cos it pushes you a little bit further than you perhaps would have done yourself because you would have just coasted and thought, well I’ll just go nice and easy today. ” Also, **SM1** saw the benefits of work pressures stating; “You know, there is always a pressure project, there is always a number one priority and I think that it's good to have an element of pressure. Some of the team if they haven't got deadlines to drive to, then they wouldn't get a lot done. So, I think there's a positive bit to that as well”.

On the contrary, another participating senior manager, **SM2**, alluded to a negative spiral caused by worrying about her work, stating: “Yeah but because I don’t stop worrying, so that’s my problem, so I know it’s something I need to deal with, but because I’m a planner and when things, don’t go to plan, then I worry. So, it’s just a never-ending cycle.” One head of department, **HD3** also shares the negative and demotivating aspects of pressures from colleagues at work, stating “It’s a bit like banging your head on a wall isn’t it, once you’ve done it for a certain number of times, you stop doing it cos it hurts. So, if you, if you’re trying to move something forward and you keep getting told no, we’re not going to change, you know you’re slowing us down, then you just think, ‘well OK I won’t bother then, there’s no point, I’ll get on and do something else.’”

Also at the personal/individual level (micro), participant **MA1** provided a perspective on the positive effects of anxiety, stating, “I think, for me, I think I'm the type of person that always wants to improve, so if I can learn something from that experience this morning and make it better for next time.” However, others said anxiety was a negative experience that sometimes made it hard for them to do their work effectively. For example, **STF4** stated “It can often make things worse, if I’m under pressure.”

At the team/department /group/ social level (meso), **HD1** provided a positive illustration which also reveal itself to act as a positive defence against anxiety. **HD1** shared the positive effects of the anxieties caused by redundancy for the team, stating:

So, speaking to my team about creating that new role gives them confidence that I'm trying to upskill the team and to give them or us a function as an improvement moving forward from where we were. Now, unfortunately that has an impact on one of the members of the team, but I think if they understand the reasons for doing it then, it kind of makes it a little more palatable.

Another head of department, **HD2**, discussed how the tense atmosphere created anxieties and demotivated staff: "So, it's more about shortness, people not responding or not responding in a friendly manner, just a very tense atmosphere..." This quote also provides an illustration of the existence of an organizational climate/mood (Ashkanasy, Wilderom & Peterson, 2000; Reichers & Schneider, 1990), as discussed in section 1.3.2 in Chapter 1. Thus, these descriptions of anxiety provided above are not seen only as separate personal responses to the experience of anxiety, but also as a social process within SMEs, where there is a strong interconnection between different experiences and outcomes of anxiety in the face of work pressures, risk and uncertainty. Thus, one can reconnect with an idea that entrepreneurial organizations such as the entrepreneurial SME in this study are often emotionally intense contexts (Cardon et al., 2012). As another example, the provision of stress management training by the organization to support teams was one of the factors discussed by the participants with often contradictory positive and negative perspectives. Some participants talked about the effectiveness of the stress management training programme which was introduced to deal with anxiety and stress by the L&D consultant as a positive experience, whereas, others seemed more negative in their responses about the programme. One participant discussed the fact that not all members of the organization have bought in to the much needed training programme to deal with stress and anxiety.

What is shown is that the positive and negative effects of anxiety are embedded with contradictions and tensions. The literature showed how emotions are socially embedded with tension and contradictions (Lewis and Smith, 2014). These contradictions and tensions are manifested at individual, team and organisational levels with negative and positive effects. As discussed in Chapter 2, Ingram et al., (2014) found that tensions in the small family business are highlighted as "tradition and change, control and autonomy, liquidity and growth." Ingram et al., (2014) also

state that the more family firm leaders perceive these tensions, the greater their potential negative impact, and that if only one side of a tension is stressed (e.g., tradition, control, liquidity), demands for the other side (e.g., change, autonomy, growth) will intensify. Long (2006) also agreed that there is a paradox inherent in organizational change situations and anxiety.

From the participant interviews, focus groups and completed questionnaires from all phases of the study, it was shown how participants at the individual, team and organisational levels responded to the tensions and the contradictions of anxiety. There were contradictions and tensions in the responses given by the participant/respondents from the entrepreneurial SME organisation in all the themes from the findings. For example, some senior managers and heads of departments felt that their team members were willing to share their concerns and anxieties within the team. However, in the phase three interviews and focus group, there was a mixture of viewpoints regarding sharing feelings of anxiety with line managers and heads of department, with some saying they were happy to do so and others stating that they would not share their anxieties with their line managers or heads of department. So, there were some inconsistencies in the views of some of the heads of departments, managers and their team members, revealing inherent contradictions and tensions.

This same contradiction was shown when some entrepreneurs and heads of departments claimed to be open with their staff, yet often said that they would not share their worries, concerns, anxiety about the business necessarily with their team members and staff. The reasons given was to stop staff from worrying about the business and lose confidence in the business. Some leaders and entrepreneurs indicated that they were more likely to share their concerns and worries with some of the senior management team or the executive team. This was also a clear indication of the inherent nature of defences against anxiety discussed earlier in this chapter (see section 6.8.1) with positive and negative consequences. These findings are consistent with previous research which shows that participants used social defences as a mechanism to protect professional reputation, protect feelings and perhaps their colleagues and organization (Lewis, 2000; Long, 2006; Krantz 2010, Lewis and Smith 2014). Some participants rationalized the tensions and contradictions induced by or inducing anxiety from a positive perspective, while others used a negative perspective.

6.11 Using a Paradoxical Lens to Sharpen the Focus on Anxiety

A paradoxical lens (Lewis, 2000; Smith & Berg, 1987) can be used to view the positive and negative effects of anxiety on entrepreneurs and SMEs as illustrated in the diagram below and as discussed in section 2.10 of Chapter 2. Using a paradoxical lens (see Figure 6.2 below) has a theoretical and practical potential, as it can help to identify critical issues that can impact on innovation, survival, growth, entrepreneurial learning and change.

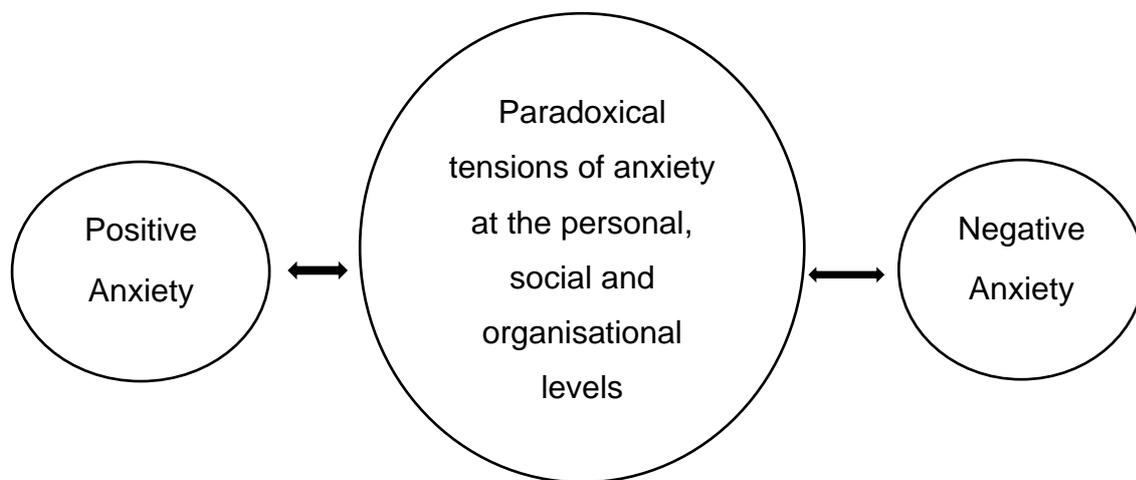


Figure 6.1 Diagram for using a paradoxical lens

Vince and Broussine (1996) used an innovative qualitative method of participatory research where they encouraged the use of drawings to access organizational members' emotional responses. This helped the members to bring out paradoxical emotions and use it as a process to deal with the uncertainties and defensiveness associated with change. Other examples where paradox has been used are in change management (Berlinger, Sitkin, Quinn, & Cameron, 1990; Sutherland & Smith 2011); organizational change and social defence (Long, 2006; Vince & Broussine, 1996).

From the findings, the leadership style and decisions made by the entrepreneurial leaders was very much evident as a theme in the manifestation of anxiety at the different relational levels. Participants expressed tensions and contradictions in relation to entrepreneurial leaders' actions and how these caused anxieties for individuals, teams, and the whole organization, as noted in section 6.8 above. This is an important point because the findings show how entrepreneurial leadership within

the context of SMEs has a strong link to anxiety related tensions and contradictions. These findings can provide practical opportunities for SME business owners and entrepreneurial leaders to reflect on how they contribute to the positive and the negative effects of anxiety in their organizations. The findings show that anxiety is an inevitable aspect of SME entrepreneurship and, as one of the participants said, “It never goes away.” If an organization is entrepreneurial, and the actors are playing entrepreneurial roles in supporting the growth and expansion of the SME, there will always be contradictions and tensions with potential positive and negative effects. Hence, the focus should be on how the paradoxical tensions can be supported and identified to ensure that it is not just detrimental but beneficial to the entrepreneurial SME.

Poole and Van da Ven (1989, p. 562) show that such tensions can be regarded as “paradoxes of social theory.” They provided four ways of working with paradoxes namely “(1) accept the paradox and use it constructively; (2) clarify levels of analysis; (3) temporally separate the two levels; and (4) introduce new terms to resolve the paradox.” Smith and Lewis (2011, p. 389) presented a “dynamic equilibrium model” which provides a means of dealing with paradox in organizations. Their model shows how cyclical responses to paradoxical tensions “enables sustainability-peak performance in the present that enables success in the future.” Miron-Skepter et al. (2017) in their quantitative and qualitative study found out how individuals deal differently with tensions within organizations and their results highlighted that “paradox mindset” is a key to unlocking the potential of everyday tensions such as resource scarcity (i.e., limited time and funding) as a source of tensions. They demonstrated that a paradoxical mindset is accepting of and energized by tensions, which was found to be helpful to individuals for improving job performance and innovation. In Chapter 7, the influence of organizational paradox theory on entrepreneurial anxiety is illustrated and discussed in the conceptual framework and model.

6.12 How the Research Questions Are Answered

This section now summarizes how the research questions and objectives have been met by this study. The first research question (RQ1) is concerned with how participants defined anxiety in the SME context. The findings show rich descriptive explanations of what is meant by anxiety from participants' own views. These were shown through cognitive, physical and emotional descriptions. These interpretations are presented in the context of their experiences, which goes in line with the interpretivist philosophy (see Chapter 3) of obtaining deep interpretations of participants' experiences and perspectives of what anxiety meant in the entrepreneurial SME context.

For example, from the phase one findings, participants defined anxiety as "stress," "fear," and "worry." Some questioned whether anxiety should be viewed as a "bad thing," whilst others saw it as an "expectation of danger." These definitions had a personal level perspective, but participants also showed that their definitions were influenced by their current social and organizational issues. For instance, being worried about the survival of a business due to the recession and partnership problems were both social and organizational problems. From the phase two findings, the definition of anxiety given by participants included particular emotions, with both positive and negative associations (e.g. worried, desperate, edginess, vulnerable, nervous, helpless, excited, brave, resilient, etc.); Allusions to anxiety in short phrases were also provided (e.g. "a whiff of panic, "bottling things up," "a bit out on a limb," "eating away at me," etc.). From the phase two and three responses: the key words that were used by the participants from the semi-structured interviews and focus group in the SME organization were often "concern," "worry," "fear," "stress," and "uncertainty." It was found that definitions of anxiety overlapped with the feelings and experiences of anxiety (RQ2).

The second research (RQ2) question is concerned with how the feelings and experiences of anxiety are interpreted by the entrepreneurial SMEs. Their experiences and feelings of anxiety were linked to workloads and roles that they had, whether as the entrepreneurial business owner or as a staff member of the entrepreneurial SME organization. Each participant linked their feelings and experiences of anxiety to the nature of the enterprise. RQ2 was also answered when participants talked about their

experiences of anxiety and the causes of anxiety from the financial to the workload challenges, planning problems, customer problems, and external factors such as governmental regulations, issues in relation to risks, starting new projects, expanding overseas, resourcing, performance and relationships with colleagues, clients and partners. The findings for RQ2 overlap with those for RQ3.

The third research question (RQ3) pertained to how anxiety is manifested at the personal, social and organizational levels for SME entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurial SME organization. The findings show that anxiety is a personal, social and organizational emotion in SME entrepreneurship that require a paradoxical lens. The following diagram below (Figure 6.2) illustrates the key points discussed on SME entrepreneurship and anxiety at the different levels with the positive and negative consequences.

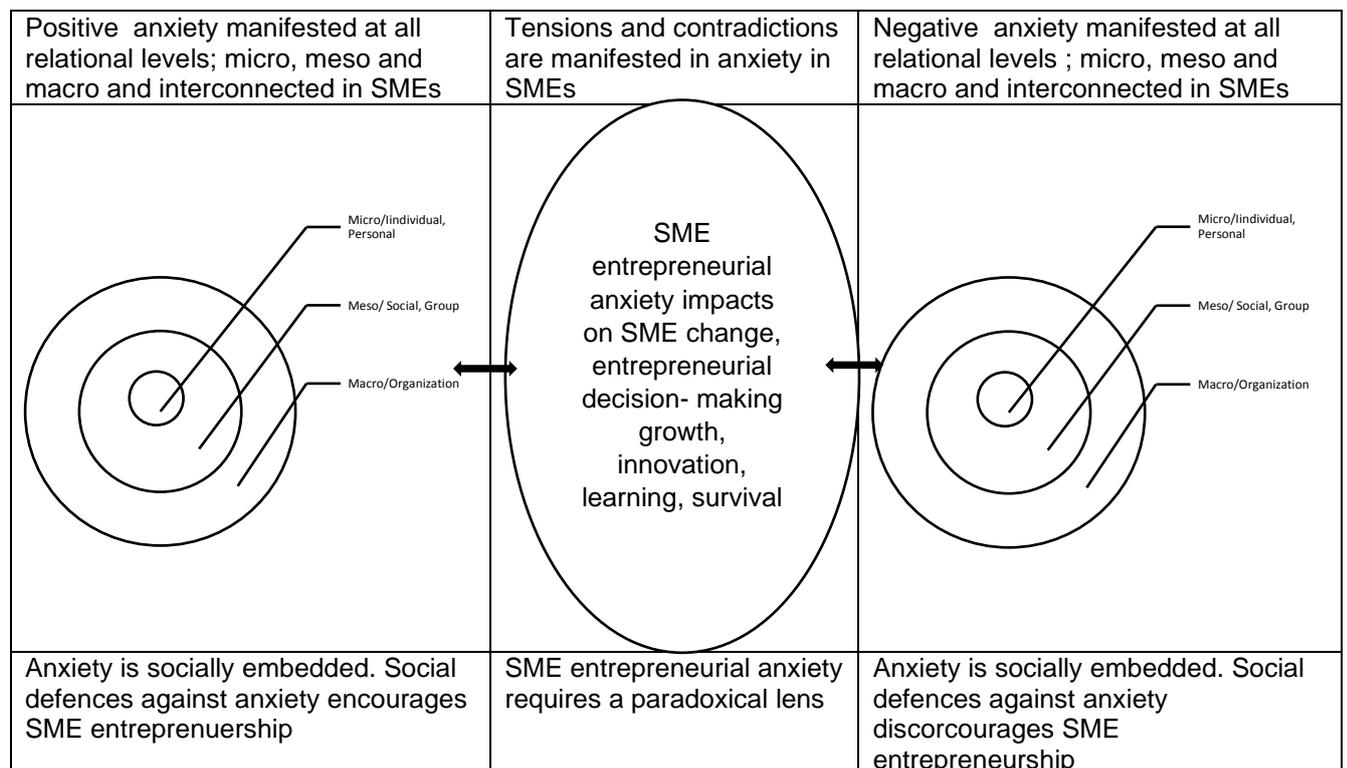


Figure 6.2 Illustration of SME entrepreneurship and anxiety

The findings support the suggestion in the literature that anxiety is socially embedded within organizations and socially constructed by participants. The findings show that at each level, there are interconnected tensions and contradictions of positive and negative anxiety. Therefore, SME entrepreneurship requires a paradoxical lens.

6.13 Summary of the Chapter

In this Chapter, the themes from the three phases of the findings are discussed showing some similarities and distinctions. The themes from the literature and findings were compared to illustrate existing gaps. The themes from the findings show how anxieties are defined and manifested at personal, social and organizational levels. The gap in the literature was addressed in relation to entrepreneurship and anxiety, especially in the context of SMEs. The key themes from the findings not reflected in the literature review included personal, social and organizational level anxieties. The findings support and expand on the literature by showing that anxiety is a personal emotion with physical consequences, emotional experiences and personal challenges. Anxiety is about responsibilities and expectations, it motivated and demotivated respondents. The literature shows how anxiety is a social emotion with social defences. This is supported by the findings that anxiety is emotionally embedded in SMEs with inherent organizational anxieties linked to money, work, risk, people, performance, customers, clients, and the external environment. Through the literature and findings, anxiety is shown to exist at the individual, team and organizational levels with positive and negative effects. Anxiety therefore inevitably possess inherent contradictions and tensions. Therefore, a recommendation is made to look at anxiety with a paradoxical lens.

In the next chapter, the paradoxical conceptual model is the overarching framework used to show the contradiction and tensions of anxiety at the three different levels. Using the concept of entrepreneurial anxiety, the contributions to knowledge is discussed, evidence is provided on how the research questions and objectives were answered in this study, conclusions made, with recommendations provided for future research. A personal reflection is also provided.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the aim is to show how this study contributes to knowledge by using the concept of **Entrepreneurial Anxiety (EA)**. In section 7.2, the research aim, questions and objectives of this study are revisited. Section 7.3 introduces the concept of entrepreneurial anxiety. In section 7.4, the focus is on how entrepreneurial anxiety is manifested at the at individual (micro), social (meso) and organizational (macro) levels with both positive and negative effects. The influences of social defence theory and paradox theory on the concept of entrepreneurial anxiety are also discussed in section 7.4. In section 7.5, the contribution to knowledge is illustrated using a conceptual framework and a summary of the theoretical contribution is illustrated in section 7.6. In section 7.7, the implications for practice and policy are examined. Section 7.8 discusses the limitations of this study. In section 7.9, recommendations for future research are provided. In section 7.10, a reflection on the PhD journey and how it impacted on this study is discussed and in section 7.11, final conclusions are drawn. Table 7.1 is a summary of the sections in this Chapter.

7.2 The research aim, questions and objectives of this study are revisited
7.3 Introduces the concept of entrepreneurial anxiety and answers to RQ1 and 2.
7.4 How entrepreneurial anxiety is manifested in an entrepreneurial SME (RQ3)
7.5 Contribution to knowledge
7.6 Summary of theoretical contribution
7.7 Contributions to Practice
7.8 Limitations
7.9 Recommendations
7.10 PhD Reflection
7.11 Conclusion

Table 7.1 Summary of the Chapter Structure

7.2 The Research Aim, Questions and Objectives Revisited

The aim of this study, as discussed in section 1.2 of Chapter 1, is to identify the meanings, feelings, perceptions, and experiences of the emotion of anxiety for entrepreneurs/business owners in the SME context and within an entrepreneurial SME organization. The purpose of this section is to revisit the research questions and objectives in order to show how the questions have been answered and the objectives met in the following sections of this chapter.

The research questions referred to as RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 and were as follows:

RQ1. What is meant by the emotion of “anxiety” for SME entrepreneurs/business owners and staff in an entrepreneurial SME?

RQ2. How are the feelings and experiences of “anxiety” interpreted by entrepreneurial SMEs?

RQ3. How is anxiety manifested at the different relational levels—namely, micro (entrepreneur/personal), meso (interpersonal, team) and macro (organizational) — within a medium-sized entrepreneurial SME?

Accordingly, the first research objective (RO1) was about understanding the underlying emotions of anxiety in organizations, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial SMEs and identifying the gaps in the literature. This has been done through the analysis of the literature in the literature review and comparisons with the findings as discussed in Chapter 6. The second objective (RO2) required an exploration of the feelings, meanings, perceptions and experiences of anxiety for entrepreneurs, business owners and staff in entrepreneurial SMEs, and the third objective (RO3) was to evaluate anxiety within the organization from the perspective of the different relational levels using the literature and qualitative research. RO2 and RO3 have been met through the literature review and using a qualitative methodological strategy to collect data and analyse the findings from three research phases, as discussed in Chapters 3 to 6 of this thesis.

Bearing in mind the research questions a literature review was conducted to understand the current research on emotions, anxiety and entrepreneurship. Review of the academic literature on emotions and entrepreneurship revealed key themes which are discussed in Chapter 2. The gaps that were found in the academic literature were mainly that the literature had not provided answers to what anxiety means for SME entrepreneurs and business owners. There was no evidence of studies that explored anxiety at the personal, social and organizational levels within the context of an entrepreneurial SME.

How the research questions and objectives were answered in the phase one and phase two findings illustrated in Chapters 4 and 5 are discussed in Chapter 6. In the following sections, the concept of entrepreneurial anxiety which reflect the themes from the literature, themes from the findings and answers to the research questions on the feelings, experiences, perceptions and manifestations of anxiety in SME entrepreneurship will now be discussed.

7.3 Concept of Entrepreneurial Anxiety (Answers to RQ1 and RQ2)

The concept of entrepreneurial anxiety was introduced in this study, and used to provide insights into the meanings, experiences and causes of anxiety and interplay between the positive and negative aspects of the emotion of anxiety for SME entrepreneurs/business owners and an entrepreneurial SME organization. It also emphasizes the impact of the social dynamics of anxiety and the social defences which both promote and prevent action at the personal (micro), team (meso) and organizational (micro) levels. The concept of entrepreneurial anxiety is distinguished from other emotions discussed in the literature in relation to emotions and entrepreneurship, albeit in the SME context.

Cardon, et al., (2005), in their series of studies on entrepreneurial emotions, focused on the emotion of passion and its impact on entrepreneurship. They conducted a systematic review of the literature on passion and entrepreneurship and identified theoretical gaps and ambiguities. To address the ambiguities and gaps, the study developed a conceptual model of emotions and emotional processes within entrepreneurship, identifying the role of passion as a key entrepreneurial emotion (Cardon et al., 2009). Consequently, subsequent research focused on the emotion of

passion in the study of entrepreneurship and emotions (Cardon et al., 2009; Cardon et al., 2012; Foo, 2009; Xiao-Ping et al., 2009). In addition, other studies have focused on emotions attached to the individual entrepreneur (Delgado García, De Quevedo Puentes, & Blanco Mazagatos, 2015), on how affect influences cognition (Baron, 2008); entrepreneurial strategic decision-making and the role of cognition (Ucbasaran, 2007; Douglas, 2009). For example, Michl, Welpe, Sporrle and Piccott (2009) show how emotions and cognitions impact the pre-entrepreneurial process. The literature also focused on either the positive or the negative effects of emotions (Foo, 2009; Oldham, 2010)

This study reveals that entrepreneurial anxiety should be considered a key aspect of entrepreneurial emotion, just as entrepreneurial passion is perceived in emotion and entrepreneurship research (Cardon et al., 2005). To address the gap in knowledge of entrepreneurial anxiety, this study shows how the of emotion anxiety is attached to individual SME entrepreneurs and an entrepreneurial SME organization. This study also shifts the focus on emotion and cognition in entrepreneurship by incorporating a social relational dimension (Fineman 200, 2003, 2008; Goss, 2008, Doern & Goss, 2012, 2013) and the perspective that emotions such as anxiety are socially constructed (Armstrong & Rustin, 2015; Douglas Creed et al., 2013; French & Vince, 1999; Long, 2006; Luscher et al., 2006). Entrepreneurial anxiety also has positive and negative consequences at the individual, social and organizational levels.

7.4 How Entrepreneurial Anxiety is Manifested in an Entrepreneurial SME (Answers to RQ3)

The relationship between the personal, social and organizational aspects of anxiety is key to a better understanding of the connection between individuals' feelings of anxiety as a social emotion (Douglas Creed et al., 2014) and the link to the organizational aspects of anxiety. The literature provides a justification and supports the approach put forward in this study. For example, Ashkanasy (2003) proposed a multi-level perspective for a deeper understanding of emotion in organizations. The multi-level approach to anxiety means that this research has also highlighted the issues concerning entrepreneurial anxiety and the interconnections across levels. The personal (micro), social (meso), and organizational (macro) tensions outlined are

important because they link individual behaviour with the complex emotional and political context within which action takes place (French & Vince, 1999; Vince, 2010; Vince & Mazen, 2014; Vince & Voronov, 2010, 2012). The emotional and political dynamics of organizations, even for SME entrepreneurs and SME organizations, are not simple because they are built from, for example: unconscious feelings that may go back a long way; unacknowledged personal insecurities; envy, competition, and desire; family histories, expectations and rivalries; work load pressures; and numerous examples of individual, group and collective organizational experiences. In section 1.3 in Chapter 1, the concept of organization was defined and the concept of “organizational climate” was described as a collective emotion, manifested at the organizational level (Ashkanasy, 2011). This definition is consistent with the findings from this study, which reveal the existence of anxiety as an organizational/collective emotion due to the nature of SMEs and causes of anxiety as discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

7.4.1 Entrepreneurial anxiety as a positive and negative emotion

The study of entrepreneurial anxiety shows how entrepreneurship is linked to both positive and negative anxiety, often at the same time. In this study, a conceptual model is created where both positive *and* negative emotions are acknowledged, as well as recognizing that these forces are likely to be ever-present and in continuous tension with each other. In the literature, anxiety was often seen as a negative emotion leading to the use of defences as a coping mechanism within organizations with both positive and negative consequences (Hirschhorn & Horowitz, cited in Armstrong & Ruskin, 2015). However, anxiety can also be seen as a positive emotion and as Rosen (2008) suggests, anxiety can motivate and discourage, but “just enough anxiety” is a requirement for a successful organization. Hirschhorn and Horowitz (cited in Armstrong & Ruskin, 2015) also looked at anxiety from a positive perspective. See section 6.10 for illustrations of positive and negative descriptions of the experiences of anxiety taken from Chapters 5 and 6. The statements from the participants from all levels show the contradictory positive and negative experiences of anxiety which were caused by the several factors related to the SME, in particular the entrepreneurial SME organization. Therefore, this study is making a contribution to knowledge by offering an additional idea, which is that the study of anxiety in entrepreneurial SMEs can

reveal ongoing tensions between positive and negative experiences of emotion that are an important part of SME entrepreneurship.

7.4.2 Entrepreneurial anxiety and social defence theory

Inherent in the concept of entrepreneurial anxiety are the concepts of social emotion and social defences. Emotions play an important role in generating enterprises and comprise the characterization of it as a social system. An interest in anxiety as a social emotion, and in particular the social defences against anxiety that are generated, makes it possible to comprehend how entrepreneurial SMEs are held together in ways that both support and undermine the potential for growth. Social defences provide a pivotal level of analysis because they have mutually reinforcing behavioural and structuring effects (Armstrong & Ruskin, 2015; Lewis & Smith, 2014).

The findings as discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 show that the pressures experienced by participants provided insights about defences against entrepreneurial anxiety. It was shown that anxiety is a “social emotion” (; Douglas Creed et al., 2014), and not just the feelings that belong to individuals (their personal envy, joy, disappointment, or shame). This was also revealed by identifying the social defences against anxiety that were used to protect, deny or even rationalize the anxiety inducing situation. As mentioned in the literature review, social defences are (unconscious) dynamics that become attached to organizational structures, practices, policies and authority relations and are used for the purpose of collectively managing anxiety (Bain, 1998; Bion, 1961; Jacques, 1955; Krantz and Gilmore, 1990; Menzies, 1960). Social defences both help organizational members to manage anxiety-provoking situations, and hinder organizations by insulating people from the consequences of their actions (Kets de Vries 1996, 2004; Krantz, 2010).

The findings as discussed in the previous chapters also revealed a variety of different individual and social defences. These included attempts to rationalize away anxiety; attempts to protect staff from anxiety through “clever camouflage”; through “wearing a professional mask all the time”; by splitting emotions between work and family (“I don’t talk much about it to people at work”); through gendered justifications (“I don’t think men generally are terribly good at that”); and by not sharing or communicating certain worries about the organization with others. These responses become enacted through

authority relations and start to characterize and then define behaviour.

Also, as in the literature (Bion, 1961; James & Clark, 2002; Jaques 1995, 1998) anxiety in this study was primarily perceived as a danger to survival, a threat to the functioning of the organization, team and individual. However, some did see anxiety in a positive light. Similarly, in this study, there were attempts to make anxiety a problem associated only with others as a form of projection. As the literature suggests, anxiety was perceived emotionally and physically in both positive and negative ways (Lindebaum & Jordan, 2014). Social defences against anxiety were used as a mechanism by individuals and groups in a way which directly impacted on the organization. Menzies Lyth (1960) found that in their efforts to defend against anxiety, individuals would avoid tasks such as meetings, refuse to take responsibility for making decisions, and avoid change. The findings in this research revealed similar patterns as some of the SME entrepreneurs and business owners, department heads, managers and staff members from all three phases used social defences to rationalize, protect, not share information, split work and personal life and even deny anxiety.

7.4.3 Entrepreneurial anxiety and paradox theory

As discussed in section 2.10, Smith and Lewis (2016) in their review of the paradox literature found studies showing how paradoxical tensions “cascade” at different levels in the organization. Tian and Smith (2014) applied paradox theory to entrepreneurial leadership in the context of social enterprises, highlighting the paradoxes which exist for social entrepreneurs. On one hand, social entrepreneurs seek to improve the world through profitable businesses. However, they also strive to fulfill a social mission associated with goals, missions, and stakeholders that are often inconsistent with profit seeking. Tian and Smith (2014) confirmed how these paradoxes and distinct challenges faced by social entrepreneurs can be embraced. Similarly, Smith, Besharov, Wessels, and Chertok (2012) proposed a paradoxical leadership model for social entrepreneurs in dealing with competing and contradictory demands of profit and the social mission.

It was shown in the literature review and in the findings from this study that paradoxical situations appear to be inherent for SMEs (Anderson and Ullah,2014).This study also revealed how for the SME entrepreneurs and business owners and the entrepreneurial

SME organization, the desire for a comfort zone of control and sustainability, at least in part, is due to the ongoing anxieties that result from internal and external tensions, continuous resourcing issues, an ever-present sense of urgency, financial worries and uncertainties, and multiple competing goals, failure of projects etc. Tensions and anxieties were inherent experiences due to the nature of SMEs. Thus, applying a paradoxical lens with social defences to the concept of entrepreneurial anxiety for SMEs provides a better understanding of the phenomena.

Lewis and Smith (2014, pp. 132-133) indicated that that in applying a paradoxical lens, two assumptions are made: First, that tensions are innate in organizations “arising from the interplay among complex, dynamic and ambiguous systems.” These dynamic ambiguous systems include “human beings, teams, [and] organizations.” Second, it is assumed that paradox is constructed cognitively and socially from the “actors’ responses to tensions” when the negative tensions are avoided, reduced, masked, or polarised by avoiding or reducing the negative affect of the tensions. Stipulating that a paradox perspective requires an examination of the actors’ responses, defences and strategies to the paradoxical tensions. Lewis (2000) identified six defences to paradox which included i) splitting, which involves reinforcing the distinctiveness of the tensions, ii) projecting, which involves attributing it to another, iii) repressing, which involves repressing/ignoring the tensions, iv) regressing, which involves going back to the prior state when the tensions did not exist, v) reaction formation, which means to reinforce the feeling opposing the tensions and vi) ambivalence by creating a distance from the tensions. These defences as illustrated by Lewis (2000) were found in this thesis, as discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Therefore, a paradox lens has been utilized to understand entrepreneurial anxiety and the social defences against anxiety at the personal, social and organizational levels. Paradox theory accepts that there are inherent tensions and anxieties in organizations at individual, team and collective levels and accepts that responses to paradox includes the use of social defence mechanisms (French & Vince, 1999; Long, 2006; Smith & Lewis, 2014). Since paradox is inherent in organizations, it would make sense that SMEs by their nature would have inherent paradoxical tensions. The goal

therefore is to accept the paradoxical tensions, learn from the situation and adopt a paradox mind set for entrepreneurial anxiety.

7.4.4 Key points about the concept of entrepreneurial anxiety

At the organizational level, for the entrepreneurial SME organization and SME entrepreneurs and business owners in this study, it is clear that anxiety is integral to the everyday experience of entrepreneurship. Anxiety is an emotion which is part of people’s excitement at the potential of the enterprise, taking risks, making decisions, resourcing and issues such as work pressures which encourage and supports collective action. Such feelings, however, sit alongside reluctance, mixed feelings, and the perceived negative consequences of taking risks, making decisions, resourcing and issues such as work pressures. Anxiety is also a social emotion and social processes in organizations are affected by anxiety in the form of social defences. While social defences hold communities together because they deter open emotional responses, they also eliminate what is productive about anxiety; they insulate people from the consequences of their actions, and they discourage difficult but important attempts at communication and interaction. For SME entrepreneurs and the people in SMEs, anxiety can consume, spoil and undermine an individual’s desire to act, but it can also motivate, excite and underpin individual’s motivation to act. The following Table 7.1 is a summary of the key aspects of entrepreneurial anxiety:

Experiences, feelings, perceptions and manifestations (RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3) of Entrepreneurial Anxiety (EA) in SMEs
EA is given physical and emotional meanings.
EA is positive and negative with paradoxical contradictions and tensions.
EA has a multi-level dimension at personal (micro-/individual), social (meso/group/team) and organizational (macro/collective) levels which are interconnected.
EA includes personal experiences and challenges.
EA is a social emotion created by the social relationships which affect the individual and organization as a whole.
Social defences against anxiety encourages and discourages SME entrepreneurship.
The nature of SMEs, internal and external organizational factors causes EA.
Paradoxical lens on entrepreneurial anxiety is required to assess impact on SME change, entrepreneurial decision -making, growth, innovation, learning, survival etc.

Table 7.1 Summary of the key aspects of Entrepreneurial Anxiety

7.5 Contribution to Knowledge: Conceptual Model

Thus, a conceptual model of entrepreneurial anxiety is created to illustrate the positive and negative tensions in anxiety at personal, social and organizational levels within the context of entrepreneurial SMEs and for SME entrepreneurs. After the phase one and two data analysis, an initial framework was created with the guidance of Russ Vince and Tony Gear who advised on the initial analysis of the pilot focus group and SME EBO interviews.

7.5.1 Initial conceptual framework

Figure 7.1 below is the initial framework which shows the interconnected contradictions and tensions of entrepreneurial anxiety.

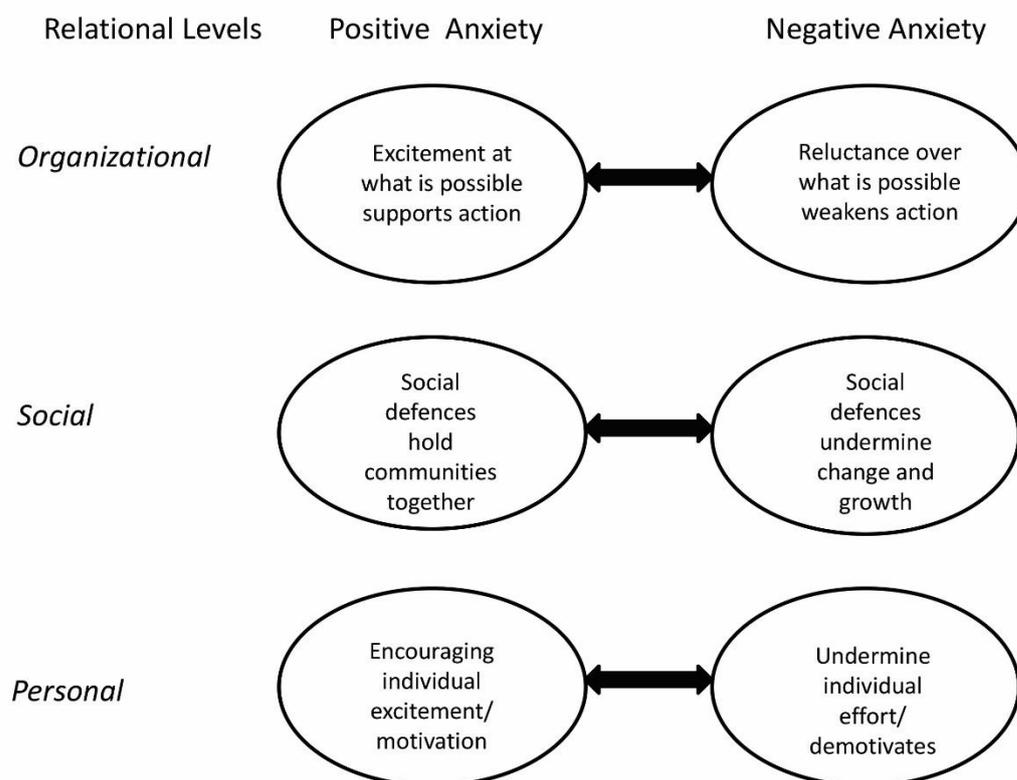


Figure 7.1: Initial framework-Interconnected contradictions mobilized by and mobilizing anxiety (Allen et al., 2017)

This initial framework was developed and presented at a conference for peer review (see Appendix K). Figure 7.1 shows how anxiety has a positive effect and a negative

effect at each level. The horizontal arrows represent the contradictions (paradoxical tensions) at each of the three levels, “organizational,” “social,” and “personal” that came from the findings. The findings indicate that these are persistent and inter-related tensions.

At the organizational relational level, Figure 7.1 illustrates that anxiety is part of peoples’ excitement at the potential of the enterprise, and this encourages and supports collective action. Such feelings sit alongside reluctance, mixed feelings, and the perceived negative consequences of risk.

At the social relational level, Figure 7.1 illustrates that organizations are affected by anxiety in the form of social defences. While social defences hold communities together because they deter open emotional responses, they also eliminate what is productive about anxiety, they insulate people from the consequences of their actions, and they discourage difficult but important attempts at communication and interaction.

At the individual level, Figure 7.1 illustrates how the people within the SMEs anxiety can consume, spoil and undermine an individual’s desire to act, but it can also motivate, excite and underpin individual’s motivation to act.

7.5.1 The developed conceptual model

The conceptual model in this thesis has been created from the literature, themes, the data analysis and findings from the three phases of data sources in this study. Thus, in Figure 7.2 below, the conceptual model of entrepreneurial anxiety is developed further from the initial framework, Figure 7.1 as illustrated above. Figure 7.2 shows the impact of entrepreneurial anxiety on SME entrepreneurship at the organizational (macro), social (meso) and personal (micro) levels, the positive and negatives tensions and the themes from the findings which reflect each level.

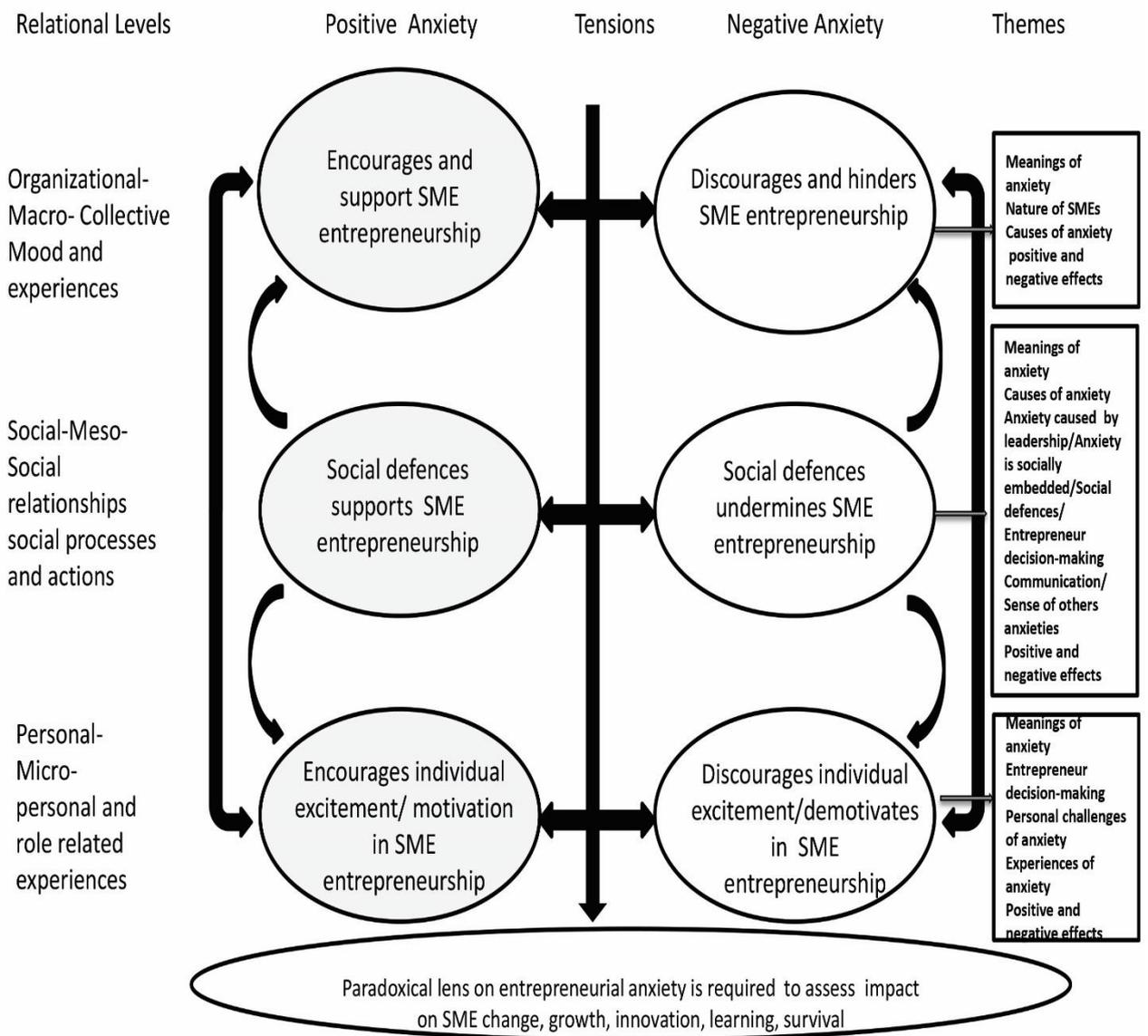


Figure 7.2: Conceptual model for Entrepreneurial Anxiety with themes from findings

In Figure 7.2 above, in addition to the horizontal arrows showing the paradoxical interconnected contradictions mobilized by and mobilizing anxiety at each relational level, Figure 7.2 has been developed further, to contain constructed arrows from the “social” level to the “organizational” and “personal” levels because it was found and extensively explained in this study that anxiety is a socially constructed emotion and is pivotal to shaping the other levels. A direct relationship with the social level, feeding out towards and amplifying the individual and organizational layers in the model, is a

key illustration. This model shows that anxiety is a personal and social emotion with the use of social defences to rationalize, protect and deal with the tensions and contradictions in SME entrepreneurship. This supports and undermines SME entrepreneurship at all levels. The model also shows arrows directly between the individual and organizational levels to indicate that they are closely connected because they are mutually constituting/reinforcing of each other in both positive and negative ways. In particular, it shows how individual actions, especially the actions and decisions of the SME entrepreneurs and leaders, influence the organization and vice versa. This inevitably has an overall impact on SME entrepreneurship.

The conceptual model of entrepreneurial anxiety (Figure 7.2) reveals the interconnectedness of paradoxical contradictions and tensions in entrepreneurial anxiety in SMEs. This conceptual model creates the opportunity and contributes to the literature on paradox theory when discussing tensions and contradictions caused, created, experienced and manifested by anxiety at the different levels for SMEs. This contribution to knowledge is crucial because it moves the literature to focusing on entrepreneurial anxiety as a key aspect of entrepreneurial emotion in SME entrepreneurship. The overlapping themes of the meanings, experiences, the nature of anxieties for SMEs, causes of anxiety, social aspects of anxiety, positive and negative impacts all contribute to the conceptual model of entrepreneurial anxiety, thereby, providing the insights and answers to the research aims, questions and objectives which were revisited in section 7.2 above. Therefore, the conceptual model (Figure 7.2) also illustrates the answers to the research questions.

7.6 Summary of Theoretical Contribution

This study has provided a conceptual model of entrepreneurial anxiety which shows the effects of positive and negative anxiety as an entrepreneurial emotion. It points to the fact that there are tensions and contradictions mobilized by anxiety and mobilizing anxiety at the personal, social, and organizational levels. What this thesis has done is create a unique perspective by showing that anxiety is an everyday emotion in the entrepreneurial SME context. This conceptual model is referred to as entrepreneurial anxiety.

First, entrepreneurial anxiety is deemed to have positive and negative effects at the individual, team and organizational levels. Research into the positive and negative effects of anxiety on entrepreneurs and on SME has practical potential, as it can help to identify critical “tipping points” where (for example) passion transforms into dispassion, obsession, or self-importance, if there is too little anxiety, too much anxiety or “just enough” anxiety in SME organizations (Hirschhorn & Horowitz, cited in Armstrong & Ruskin, 2015; Rosen, 2008; Vince, 2010).

Second, entrepreneurial anxiety emphasizes the connection between anxiety as a social emotion and the social defences that both promote and prevent action at all levels. Thus, social defence theory (Armstrong & Ruskin 2015; French & Vince 1999; Jacques, 1955; Long 2006; Menzies Lyth, 1960) is acknowledged and applied to entrepreneurial anxiety.

Third, using paradox theory as the overarching theoretical perspective has helped to identify how anxiety informs contradictions and sustains the interplay between underlying elements of entrepreneurial behaviour and action in the SME context and entrepreneurship. Paradox theory invites scholars to consider both/and rather than either/or perspectives on contradictory organizational phenomena (Lewis, 2000, Smith & Berg 1987; Smith & Lewis 2011; Lewis & Smith 2014).

Fourth, using a paradox lens will enable further research into understanding the impact of entrepreneurial anxiety on SME change, entrepreneurial decision-making, growth, innovation, learning and survival etc. The following diagram Figure 7.3 adds a summary of conclusions on entrepreneurial anxiety as developed in the conceptual model.

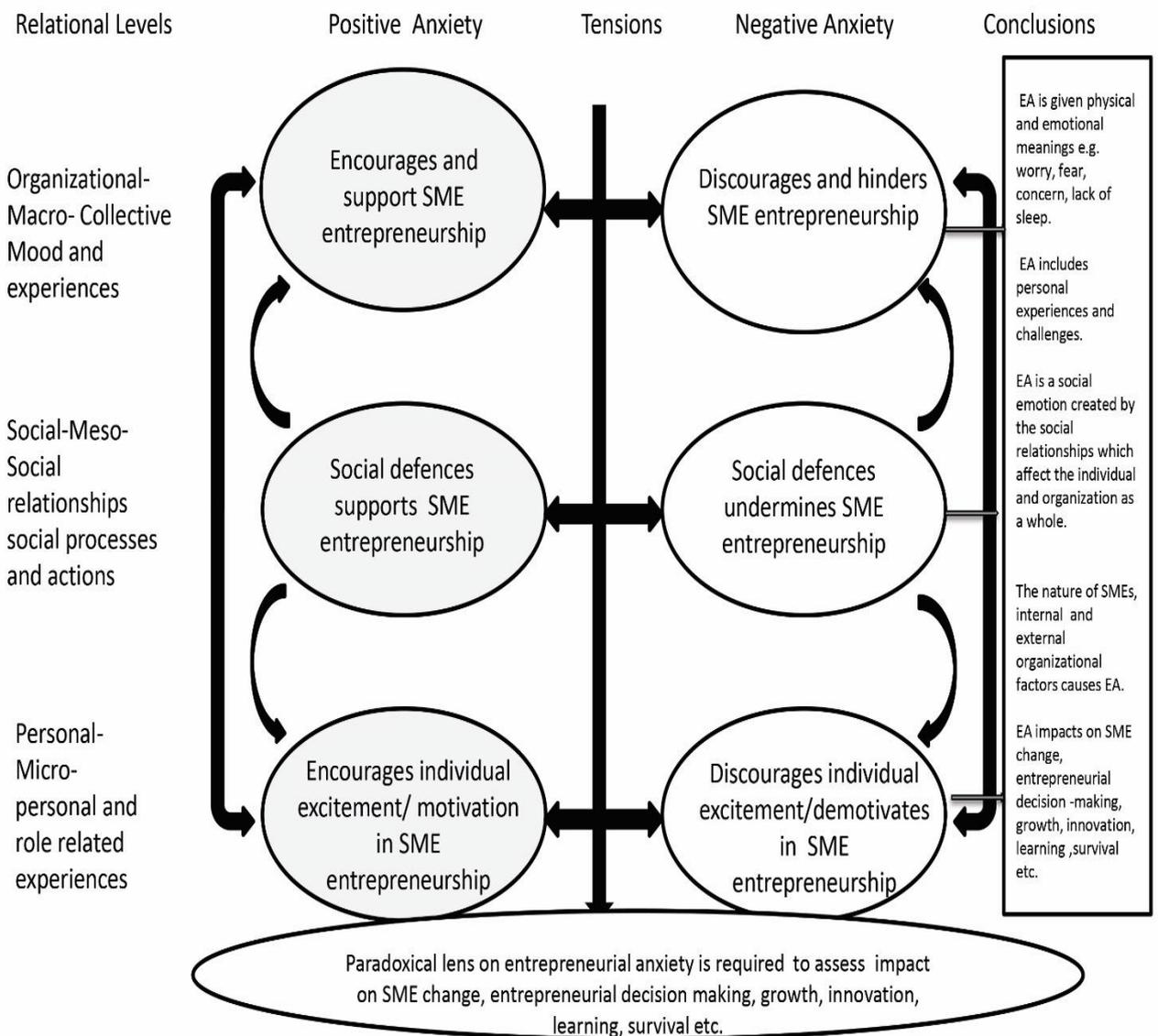


Figure 7.3 Concept model for Entrepreneurial Anxiety with conclusions

In addition to the theoretical contributions, the concept of entrepreneurial anxiety provides practical and policy contributions as discussed in the following section 7.7.

7.7 Contributions to Practice and Policy

The discussion of the findings and analysis in this study show that entrepreneurial anxiety is an everyday experience in the entrepreneurial process in the context of SME entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is defined and discussed in section 1.4.3. One definition of entrepreneurship includes the innovation of products, services, and new markets which allows for exploitation of new opportunities (Bessant & Tidd, 2015). Entrepreneurship for SMEs is full of uncertainties and certainties (Anderson & Ullah, 2014). Thus, entrepreneurial anxiety is found to be socially constructed and messy, and it influences entrepreneurial intentions, entrepreneurial process, entrepreneurial activities and outcomes. It also shows how anxiety, because it is an everyday occurrence in the context of SMEs, is perceived and experienced in different ways. Entrepreneurial anxiety is linked to feelings of fear, worry, uncertainty, anger, and frustration, and often perceived as stressful. At the personal level, anxiety has emotional and physical consequences which should not be ignored by enterprises. At the social level, as discussed in Chapter 6, key practical challenges were revealed from in the findings and are summarized as follows:

1. There is a lack of self-awareness in sensing the anxieties of others
2. Communication of anxieties in SMEs are a challenge
3. Entrepreneurial leadership and actions cause anxieties in SMEs
4. Entrepreneurial decision- making causes anxieties in SMEs

The implications for practice for entrepreneurs within SMEs spell out the benefits of taking a more complex view of anxiety as a social emotion that is integral to the practice of entrepreneurship. SME entrepreneurs' main existing strategy of just "not talking" seem too simplistic and, in many cases, there were no strategies in place. Anxiety can isolate a person from others, create unease, and reinforce "stuckness" (Anderson & Ullah, 2014) in patterns of behaviour. Sharing concerns and worries and communicating about anxieties with others may involve considerable emotional effort and can be difficult because of the authority or power relations present in the SME. For example, in the entrepreneurial SME organization, those who complained about

the leadership causing anxieties rarely communicated their concerns to the leadership concerned. At the same time, entrepreneurial leaders in the SMEs were not willing to open up and share their challenges about making entrepreneurial decisions.

So, at the social level, increasing opportunities for entrepreneurial learning and critical reflection (Vince and Reynolds 2009; Reynolds and Vince, 2010) in the enterprise will open up the potential to engage with anxieties. For example, room-based group inquiry is one approach to engaging with anxieties with reduced risk or threat to individuals. (Read et al., 2011). In practical terms, this involves willingness to question and to reflect on the taken-for-granted aspects of behaviour in the enterprise and how they are reinforced through defensive behaviour in ways that discourage an interest in change. Identification of the social defences against anxiety that characterize an enterprise will help to break through rationalizations and processes of self-protection that limit SME entrepreneurship.

7.8 Limitations of the Study

This study has adopted a qualitative strategy in the collection and analysis of data. There are disadvantages of using a qualitative methodology which can include issues such as time constraints, volume of data generated and complexity of analysis. As previously discussed in Chapter 3, qualitative data has been generally criticized by quantitative researchers for being too subjective, difficult to replicate, not easily transferable and lacking in transparency (Bryman & Bell, 2006, 2011). According to Cope (2005), inquiring into the world of “lived experiences” does provide its own complexities, as the interpretative accounts that individuals provide may not give the “full story,” as indicated by Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 12, 2000). Hence, there is a recognition that any accounts of human experience are simply a “photographic slice of life” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 155). Hence, such research can be seen to be limited due to being located “in a particular context at a particular time” (Cope, 2005, p. 10). However, in Section 3.9, it was shown that trustworthiness is ensured during the research design, data collection and analysis of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1995).

Some practical limitations of this study include the following:

- Lack of opportunity to conduct first/second semi-structured interviews with some SME entrepreneurs from the phases one and two of the study.
- Lack of opportunity to interview staff in the overseas offices of the case study entrepreneurial SME organization.

Also, the researcher is aware that as a qualitative case study (Yin, 2003) and due to the sample size, broad generalizations cannot be made (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Nobel & Smith, 2015; Saunders et al., 2009), but this has been mitigated with the aim of ensuring trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). In this research study, source triangulation was achieved through the three phases of data collected from the focus group of SME entrepreneurs/business owners, one-on-one interviews with entrepreneurs/business owners, and then interviews/focus group with staff from the case study SME organization. Other valid sources of data for such qualitative research (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994) such as anonymous questionnaires, organization charts, emails, respondent validation meetings with staff and presentations from the organization over a period of four years were also used for the data collection and analysis. Data saturation and inductive thematic saturation was also achieved (Saunders et al., 2017), as discussed in Section 3.9. Bearing in mind the practical limitations of this study, the recommendations for future research will now be made.

7.9 Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused specifically on creating theory linked to entrepreneurial anxiety in the SME context. Through the concept of entrepreneurial anxiety in the SME context, this study makes a strong contribution in an area that has been neglected. New knowledge is provided for understanding how anxiety is experienced through the contradictions at the personal, social and organizational levels of SME entrepreneurship, and therefore how anxiety both motivates and discourages entrepreneurship, sometimes simultaneously. However, recommendations for further research includes the following:

- A state-trait entrepreneurial anxiety inventory could be created and adapted as a psychometric test to assess levels of entrepreneurial anxiety in entrepreneurial contexts. A recommendation, thus, is to use the clinical psychology literature and conduct further research that could enable the creation of a specific scale for assessing entrepreneurial anxiety. This will have practical implications of helping organizations assess when/if entrepreneurial anxiety is having too much, too little or just enough positive and negative effects.
- Another recommendation is to explore further, how entrepreneurial anxiety is manifested in entrepreneurship in other contexts such as large corporations. However, in this thesis, the focus has been in the context of the small and medium size enterprises. This is an area in which the literature review showed there was a lack in or a gap in the literature and the decided focus.
- A recommendation for further research is the possible use of quantitative data to understand more about the phenomena of entrepreneurial anxiety.
- Further research could be conducted to understand how SMEs can be sustained in the face of contradictory emotions and how entrepreneurial learning about entrepreneurial anxiety can be encouraged as a result of the knowledge provided by this study.
- Finally, Paradoxical lens on entrepreneurial anxiety is required to assess impact on SME change, entrepreneurial decision -making, growth, innovation, learning, survival etc.

In this thesis, the conceptual model which focuses on the paradoxical tensions of the positive and negative effects of entrepreneurial anxiety is novel and contributes to the academic literature by providing a starting point for understanding entrepreneurial anxiety in the SME context.

7. 10 Personal Reflections

This is my reflection on my doctoral research journey and how this journey has impacted the outcome of this study. In this section, I will be making references to relevant academic literature on reflection and learning such as Gibbs' (1988), Kolb's (1984), and Schon's (1983) reflection/learning models. I will be reflecting on the start of my doctoral research journey, which started back in 2009 with the DBA course whilst I was in full time employment as an SME entrepreneur. This was followed by a break in 2010 and a change to PhD doctoral studies from 2011 onwards when I left my business and decided to focus on an academic career and research.

7.10.1 DBA to PhD 2009-2011

I initially enrolled with the University of Gloucestershire (UoG) as a doctoral business administration student in 2009 because I was then the co-founder and director of an entrepreneurial SME training and development consultancy business. The business had been running for eight years and I was keen to improve my personal business experience and expertise. So, I felt a doctoral study in the form of a DBA would be a useful asset to myself and the business. However, in 2009 the organisation won a business contract with the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) which required my full attention. As a result, in 2010, after the first year of completing the DBA, I decided to withdraw from the programme to focus on the business, which I then worked on from 2010 to 2012. However, by 2011, I had decided that I would prefer to pursue an academic career and to leave the business at the end of the two-year DWP funded project. So, I started to work on an ad-hoc/part time basis with the UoG as an academic from May 2011. I then changed my programme from the DBA to the PhD in 2011 on the advice of the postgraduate programme course leader at the time.

My initial research interest when I was pursuing the DBA was social entrepreneurship and the learning that comes from the leadership of a social entrepreneurial organisation. I had this interest because I was a leader, director and co-founder of an entrepreneurial business which was in essence a private company with a social mission. I also had links with other entrepreneurial SMEs and business owners through my networking. So, I knew that it would be possible for me to have access to

data collection. I felt that it was important for me to develop myself through a doctoral study, but also to use the experience of networking with other entrepreneurs and business owners as a way of learning about what was good and bad about my experiences as a social entrepreneur. Through a doctoral evaluation and analysis, I would be able to come up with ideas, solutions and an action plan on how I could make things better for my organization and other SMEs. However, my focus changed from the DBA to the PhD because I decided to move on from business practice to academic practice. So, it became inevitable that it was important for me to learn about academic practice and at the same time pursue a PhD study on SMEs.

7.10.2 SME Research Pilot 2012-2013

An opportunity came in 2012 when I was asked by the UoG to take part and lead a small research project on SME entrepreneurs in relation to their emotions. I had the sole responsibility of finding the SME participants, getting their consent and conducting the focus groups and one-on-one interviews on the subject. I therefore decided to make the topic of anxiety in the entrepreneurial SME context the focus of my PhD study in 2013. The support of two senior academics, Tony Gear and Russ Vince, during this period was invaluable. They helped me to make sense of the data by discussing and analysing it and co-authoring a paper, which is now awaiting journal submission.

7.10.3 Organization Studies and EURAM Conferences

In 2014, I was able to present at the *Organisation Studies Conference at Oxford University*, where my conference paper was accepted. In that conference, I was able to talk about my PhD research topic and received feedback from my peers on the findings from the initial focus group and one-on-one interviews with SME entrepreneurs. One of the key feedback discussions that came out of the conference was whether emotional labour was a concept I should investigate for my research. But, after discussions with my supervisors and adviser Russ Vince, a decision was made that my focus should not be on emotional labour, whereas social defences against anxiety was a concept that required further investigation in the literature. Again in 2017, I attended and presented at the European Academy of Management

Conference (EURAM) in 2017, where my developed thesis and paper was peer reviewed and accepted as a conference paper (see Appendix K).

7.10.4 Tensions of PhD work and full-time academic practice

Moon (2004) stipulates the need for a deeper dimension in the mental process of reflection. And this view supports Kolb's model of reflective observations which requires deep thinking about the situation. In applying this to my PhD journey, I can see that I have gone through an exciting, challenging, difficult, emotionally intense process over the last seven years. Through the process of research, collecting data, writing conference papers, journal article submission and writing the PhD thesis with the support of my supervisors, I have been able to learn and develop my research, academic writing and data analysis skills.

This journey has also been emotionally tough because as an academic in full time practice, from 2014, I was leading an undergraduate business management programme which impacted on my ability to complete my PhD thesis. From 2014 to 2016, I was running and supporting the Business Management Degree Programme as Course Leader and responsible for delivering several modules at the undergraduate and post graduate levels as a senior lecturer, whilst attempting to conduct my PhD research. That was a very difficult balancing act which led to feelings of frustration, insecurity and anxiety for me. Therefore, I decided to reduce my management roles within the University in 2016, which enabled me to progress on my PhD thesis.

However, that was severely challenged when my second supervisor, who I had been working closely with, suddenly passed away in September 2017. That was an emotional blow and, referring to Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988), in terms of my feelings, I was very sadly overwhelmed by the sudden passing away of a very supportive supervisor. However, the positive from that was that my first supervisor was there to support, and an experienced supervisor was provided to me instantly, so that no time would be wasted. The journey has been positive, negative, exciting and very difficult. Like my PhD thesis topic, my experiences have been filled with contradictions and tensions. This has influenced by ability to understand the contradictions and tensions identified in the findings of this study

7.10.5 PhD lessons learnt and future action plan

So, the lessons learnt are that it was important for me to be continuously reflective on my current circumstances and adapt to my environment. As a result, I moved away successfully from a DBA to a PhD programme and changed my topic successfully from social enterprise organization learning to anxiety within SMEs. I feel that I came to the point where the topic I focused on for my PhD thesis was relevant to my academic practice and my previous experience as an entrepreneur and SME business owner who experienced several emotions. It has been exciting for me to know that I can learn through my research about the role that emotion and anxiety plays in the entrepreneurial context, especially for the SME entrepreneur. This PhD thesis has really made me understand and reflect on what I had gone through when I ran my business as co-founder between 2002 and 2012. My transition to an academic has been exciting, difficult and very beneficial. I have found the feedback which I have received from my supervisors over the years really beneficial. There have been several suggestions for making my work better. In particular, in the last 6 months I have found the constructive criticisms and suggestions provided to be very useful and it allowed me to improve the standard and the quality of my PhD research. I was able to start the process of abstract conceptualization according to Kolb (1984), which involves experimenting, planning and improving. I was able to experiment by conducting the research and presenting at conferences and planning on how I incorporate all feedback into my PhD thesis. I have also been able to gain deeper learning, especially as the PhD is mainly self-directed learning as a process.

Knowles (1984) indicated the importance of self-directed learning, which is necessary and effective in adult and higher education learning. I have been able to do so through the PhD journey. I have also been able to learn to balance between work, PhD thesis and family life. I feel that my academic practice and research experience on the PhD over the last seven years has really moved from surface to deeper learning. Moon (1998, p.141-146) provides a model for learning and reflection. In this model, she explains the stages of learning, stating that noticing and making sense and making meaning would all fall under the category of surface learning, whereas working with meaning and transformative learning leads to a deep learning process. Like Moon (2004), I believe that such depth of learning requires one to reflect meaningfully and

take new actions. Moon's (1999) explanation of using reflection to facilitate learning is like Kolb's' (1984) idea of abstract conceptualization which requires deep thinking and experience to facilitate effective learning. The PhD experience does exactly that for me. I have been able to gain deeper learning through the PhD journey and contribute to new knowledge in entrepreneurial anxiety within the SME context. So, in terms of further action plans, my goal is to work towards ensuring that the journal article which I have written with my co-authors will get published and present in future symposiums in the field of entrepreneurial anxiety in the SME context. I am really looking forward to obtaining a doctoral degree which will enhance and support my desire to improve on my practice as an academic.

7.11 Concluding Summary

In this study, I have presented ways in which anxiety functions within SMEs and I have developed a conceptual model that illustrates the concept of entrepreneurial anxiety. My purpose has been to highlight the effects of anxiety and, particularly, to point towards tensions, contradictions mobilized by, and mobilizing anxiety at different levels (personal-micro, social-meso, organizational-macro). I have added something distinctive to research into emotion and entrepreneurship because anxiety is not an emotion that has been studied in this context. It is also broadening research within this area because it takes a different perspective to studies that have focused on emotions attached to the individual entrepreneur, how affect influences cognition, or on either the positive or the negative effects of emotions. This thesis provides insights into the interplay between the positive and negative aspects of anxiety in SMEs. It also emphasizes the impact of the social dynamics of anxiety in SMEs, which both promote and prevent entrepreneurship action. Using an inductive approach, new knowledge has been created and practice informed by meeting the research aims, questions and objectives of this study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Pilot Focus Group Briefing

Appendix B: EBO Pilot Focus Group Summary Transcript

Appendix C: Example of Informed Consent form

Appendix D: Copy of Questionnaire

Appendix E: Sample Copies of Three EBO Interview Transcripts

Appendix F: Sample Copies of Two SME Staff Interview Transcripts

Appendix G: Copies of Two SME Staff Completed Questionnaires

Appendix H: Copy of SME Staff Focus Group Transcript

Appendix I: Data Analysis and Sources Map (Excel Spreadsheets)

Appendix J: Data Analysis for SME Case Study Organization

Appendix K: EURAM Conference Paper (Allen, Gear and Vince 2017)

Appendix A: Pilot EBO Briefing

Anxiety research briefing for pilot focus group meeting

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is defined using the common understanding of anxiety which is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. We are using the common understanding of anxiety for the purposes of our research.

Activity: Test your current state. Below is a list of emotions and feelings which relate to anxiety. Please tick the responses that best describe your current state:

	Not present	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Very Severe
Anxious mood- worries, anticipation of the worst, fearful anticipation, irritability					
Tension- feelings of tension, inability to relax, fatigability					
Fears – feeling that something bad is about to happen					
Insomnia- Difficulty with sleep in relation to the business					
Intellectual- difficulty concentrating					
Depressed Mood – loss of interest					

Purpose of the Research Project

The purpose of the pilot research is to find out the nature and experiences of anxiety in Small to Medium -Sized Enterprises (SMEs). Participants from SMEs are invited to take part through an informal interview format.

Why SMEs?

In the UK, at the start of 2012, there were an estimated 4.8 million UK private sector businesses, employing an estimated 23.9 million people and with an estimated

combined annual turnover of £3,100 billion. Almost all of these businesses (99.2 per cent) were small (0 to 49 employees). Only 30,000 (0.6 per cent) were medium-sized (50 to 249 employees) and 6,000 (0.1 per cent) were large (250 or more employees). These percentages have remained fairly stable since 2000 (the earliest point for which comparable data exists). SMEs together accounted for more than half of employment (59.1 per cent) and almost half of turnover (48.8 per cent) in the UK private sector, at the start of 2012 (see attached Table).

Source: www.bis.gov.uk

By conducting this pilot research on SMEs. We are aiming to gain some understanding in an area where there has been little or no academic research. Our goal is to share the insights gained and encourage further research.

Dee Allen LLB, LLM, MCIPD Email: dallen3@glos.ac.uk/Tel: 07816506782

Appendix B: EBO Pilot Focus Group Summary Transcript

Sandler Training, Cheltenham Film Studios 4:00-5:00 pm/16-5-13

Present: TL, AM, CHS, MT, HD, CH, SD,SB

Interviewer: Dee Allen, began with a brief outline of the project (see attached Briefing Paper) and the session quickly moved into an interactive discussion during which the following issues were discussed:-

Questions considered by Participant key comments and responses
focus group for their
unstructured discussion

What is "anxiety" for business owners Stress", "Fear" "Worry" causes anxiety

"Anxiety = sustained worry over a period that has a debilitating effect"

"Is anxiety a bad thing"?

"Need to be aware of danger"

"Does it have different names"?

What are the causes of "anxiety" in the context of a SME? "Scale of enterprise will impact on the level of anxiety and where it is experienced"

"Anxiety is related to money"

"Making decisions causes: -

"Overload"

"Paralysis"

"Post event rationalization i.e. ascribing intent or an outcome to a decision that only became apparent after the decision was made"

"Dealing with uncertainty + ambiguity causes anxiety".

"Gender linked to anxiety "

"Personality Theories - -links to Introversion"

"Age, the impact of anxiety is different at different ages.

- Influence of childhood experiences affect our levels of anxiety”

“Option – Risk – Fear causes Anxiety”

“Pipeline issues as a source of Anxiety I.e. Concerns about next contract”

“Our response to situations is often determined by the scripts we carry in our heads”.

“Denial of anxiety showing you’re stressed and being very busy is prized “

“Shift in politics where there is an absence of taking responsibility”

“Stress as external - workload, bank, finance, busy”

“Anxiety as inner state, showing anxiety or talking about anxiety is equivalent to weakness”

“Relationships going poorly are very anxiety inducing”

“Threats to Reputation are very anxiety inducing”

“Trust is SME capital. If our clients lose trust and confidence in us, then this is serious”.

“Range of tasks needing to be done is daunting as an SME

“Selling as a necessary skill but one that many sole traders shy away from

“Knowing when to charge the right fees causes anxiety”

Appendix C: Example of Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for Research Interview

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to find out the nature and experiences of anxiety in Small to Medium -Sized Enterprises (SMEs). Participants from SMEs are invited to take part in this exploratory research which will be conducted in an informal interview format and should last for about 1 hour.

SMEs are defined as businesses with 0-249 employees and turnover less than 50 million euros. In this research study, we are interviewing the managers, leaders and owners of a sample of small businesses with 0 to 49 employees (www.bis.gov.uk).

For the purposes of this research, anxiety is defined using the common understanding of anxiety which is a *feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. Anxiety is fear without an object. Something to be avoided or controlled*

as it “incites the feeling of being uncomfortable “(Salecl, 2004 quoted in Vince, R.2010 - Anxiety, Politics and Critical Management Education).

The interviewer, Dee Allen (University of Gloucestershire) will be conducting the research interviews and the interview will be audio recorded and analysed by Dee Allen.

Participant Rights

- Your Participation in this research is voluntary, it is without remuneration and you have the right to withdraw from the study.
- You have the right to review the interview audiotape and interview transcripts if requested.
- As a participant, you have the right to privacy and request for your identity to remain un-identified.
- The interview data will be analysed and transcribed by the researchers; Dee Allen who will take all reasonable steps to protect participants' anonymity.

Benefits

A key benefit of this research is to gain some understanding of SME experiences in an area where there has been limited academic research, share that understanding and encourage further research and data is also collected as part of Dee Allen's PhD research.

Confidentiality of Records

The researchers will maintain the confidentiality of participants and all original records will be kept in a secure place and in accordance with the Data Protection legislation.

Dissemination

The findings of this research may be published in an academic journal and/or used for any further academic research including PhD. In reporting the findings, participants' own words might be used in any research report or paper.

Signatures

By signing this form, you are hereby giving your consent to participate in this research study.

Participant Name:

Title:

Organization:

Date:

Researcher Name:

Title:

Organization:

Date:

Appendix D: Copy of Questionnaire

Experiences of Anxiety in SMEs- Questionnaire

The aim of this PhD research is to find out the experiences of anxiety in Small to Medium -Sized Enterprises (SMEs). All data collected will be kept confidential and used only for the purposes of this research by Dee Allen, University of Gloucestershire. If you have any questions about this research, please contact Dee at dallen3@glos.ac.uk.

Questions for participants- Please tick the relevant answers:

1. Position in the organisation:

Director

Head of Department

Manager

Team/Staff member

2. Gender:

Male

Female

3. Would you describe the term anxiety as a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome?

Yes

No

4. If you answered No, how would you describe anxiety?

5. Please indicate which of the following issues makes you anxious?

Client/customer problems

Business partnership problems

Financial

Failure of projects

Making decisions about work related issues

Senior managers

Other members of staff

Other issues

None of the above

6. Do people talk about feeling anxious in the organisation?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Always

7. Have you been or are you currently anxious about a particular situation?

Yes

No

8. Has or are any of the following factors caused or causing the anxiety?

Personal

Work related

Organisation related

9. Do you think that feeling anxious has affected your work?

Yes

No

Sometimes

10. Is a member of staff in your organisation currently anxious or has been anxious about a particular situation?

Yes

No

Don't Know

11. Has or are any of the following factors the caused or causing staff anxiety?

Personal

Work related

Organisation related

Don't Know

12. Do you think that feeling anxious has affected how staff work?

Yes

No

Don't Know

13. Do you think that feeling anxious has affected your judgement and decisions?

Never

Sometimes

Always

14. Do you think that feeling anxious has affected staff judgement and decisions?

Never

Sometimes

Always

15. How does the organisation respond to anxiety in the workplace?

Support not provided

Support sometimes provided

Support always provided

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Appendix E: Sample Copies of Three EBO Interview Transcripts

Interview Transcript- P4 -Medium Sized SME -EBO

Interviewer Name: Dee Allen (**DA**)

Interviewee Name: (P4)

At the start of the recorded interview, DA made the formal introductions and confirmed that the interview consent form has been signed by the participant. Then the interview began as follows:

DA: Can you first tell me about yourself, tell me a bit about your role in your organisation and the organisation itself?

P4: My name is [P4] I am Chief Operation Officer (COO) at [name of organization]. It's an organisation that provides low cost insurance products to low income families in the developing world. We have operations in number countries in Africa and in Asia, providing insurance products for around 4 and half million people working with a range of partners in the countries where we operate. My role as COO, I am overall responsible for the delivery of operations across our business umm including the implementation of new products and services. And also responsible for the development and implementation of the technology and IT systems required to support the various projects that we run. I've been with [name of organization] for just over 4 years now. I originally joined as a consultant on a short-term assignment, was then appointed Chief Technology Officer after about 6 months and later became COO after a restructure of the management team within the organisation.

DA: Fantastic, thank you [P4]. This interview is about anxiety about SME. (DA reads out EU definitions of SME for Martin to choose for [name of organization])

P4: I would describe us as medium sized we have around 180 employees worldwide, having said that in many ways it feels like a smaller organisation because a lot of those numbers are in the businesses in specific countries, for example our operation in the Philippines has around 70 of those people, and operations in some of the countries in Africa are around 20 to 30 people. The head office team is 13 people. So, in terms of the people within the organisation I interact with on a daily basis is a much smaller number.

DA: Ok thank you. His interview is about anxiety. What do you understand by the term anxiety?

P4: Umm anxiety is concern, worry about events, either could be future events, it could be current events and for some people it could be past events. For me personally, I would say it is primarily about current and future. So, lack of certainty

and lack of understanding about what might happen and concern about the impact that it would have on me personally, the company or widely.

DA: What makes people in your organisation anxious?

P4: Umm (chuckle) speaking personally, I think that there are a number of things. Umm concern about the amount of work to do and deadlines. So, we work on a number of challenging projects and what we are trying to do is often quite innovative and new. And frequently we are in a situation where the partners or the customers we are working with have unrealistic in our opinion views as to what could be achieved and when. But as a small organisation and with the need to grow and manage the business, there is I guess a certain amount of pressure to deliver on timescales even if we believe they are unrealistic. And as a relatively small team operating across many countries, that does put additional pressure on just in terms of the workload. Umm, speaking personally, the team has grown rapidly, or the work has grown rapidly, the team not so much so. Umm there is often a lot of individual pressure on people, umm, and nobody to I guess pick up things if you're, there isn't the capacity to deal with them. So, this makes me potentially anxious because they feel that they are the only one who can deliver and there is no one else to pick up any slack if needed. Added with, I think that there is an additional pressure because of the work we do where people spend a significant amount of time travelling and away from home and so extra anxiety because of that pressure in been away from families.

DA: So, what makes you anxious in particular, can you give me an example?

P4: Umm specifically for me, it does relate to the things that I have just talked about. A very specific example at the moment, so we recently signed a joint venture with an organisation to deliver a number of projects in Asia. The joint venture itself had been delayed but expectation had been set with the customers that we were due to be working with that things could move ahead. So, by the time we signed the joint venture we were already up against time lines to deliver projects at the same time, because we were waiting for the joint venture to be signed, we weren't able to recruit additional staff that needed to deliver the project because we didn't know if the joint venture was going to be signed. Which therefore meant that when projects kicked off, although I am COO and supposed to be taking a strategic oversight type role, I actually ended up being the project manager and implementation resource for one of the major projects which is in Bangladesh (laughter)? I've spent much of the last three months in Bangladesh working essentially full time under this project whilst having to maintain my COO role. So, that means that I am typically doing, 10/11 hours whilst I have at the office in Bangladesh and then going back to the hotel room doing a further 5 or 6 hours of calls emails etc. on UK time whilst in Bangladesh. Umm caching a few hours' sleep and then going back to the office. And so, that's one particular example, umm obviously causes an amount of anxiety just in terms of being able to deliver what is expected for that project but also been able to keep my broader responsibilities under control and manage as well as I can whilst delivering on that project. (Pause)

DA: Interesting, so, do people in your organisation talk about feelings of anxiety?

P4: Umm yes and no. People certainly talk about the stress that they are under and the things that are causing it. I don't think people so much talk about the impact it's having on them. I think people will talk about the impact on their families, in terms of being away from home, but I personally, haven't experienced many people saying that "look this is how I feel as a result of the stress or anxiety".

DA: Why do you think that's the case? Why do you think people are not doing that?

P4: Because we are British (laughter). I mean, I think a number of different reasons. I don't know, maybe some people don't talk to me. I think the fact that I'm very busy myself perhaps means that people don't feel that they can talk to me about it. So, I can't say honestly that it doesn't happen. Elsewhere in the organisation, there is a certain amount of, it's my position. They see how busy I am and therefore they feel, should they complain about this in relation to mine? Umm, recently, I haven't really been here to talk to anyone about it. So, I don't know that it doesn't happen, but I don't think that people talk at that level about it. I think people will talk about the impact on their ability to do their work and not about how it is personally making them feel.

DA: You've given me an example about things that causes you anxiety. So, do you talk to anyone in the organisation or outside about your anxiety.

P4: Umm I talk to my wife and other members of my family. I don't talk much about it to people at work. Umm I do talk a little bit to the CEO about it as he is a friend of mine. But again, I tend to position it more in terms of the impact it is having on my ability to do my job, it's causing me to be away from my family a lot. I think that there is awareness, certainly in the last few months that I have been under a particular amount of stress. Umm but I haven't directly articulated that to people in the organisation.

DA: Is there a reason why you don't or haven't had a chance to do that with people within your organisation?

P4: Umm, I think generally because I have tended to keep work separate from personal feelings in my life. It's more difficult in this organisation because it is small and because a number of people know each other. Umm and I think you can't hide it. I don't open up and do it, I don't go out and socialise with the people from work. Umm, partly because I am not around much and when I am, I feel that I owe the time to my family and not to my work colleagues. So, I guess, I've always been more of a private person. I share my feelings with my family, more than I do with my work colleagues. (Pause)

DA: OK, do you think that people in your organisation avoid talking about their feelings of anxiety?

P4: No, I don't think that they avoid it. And I am aware that there are some things that people have talked about. Umm, personal circumstances that they have talked about with other people within the organisation that they haven't talked to me about.

Umm even people who report directly to me. There is an example, one of my employees was going through, and I know he spoke to the CEO about because he told me about it later. But he hadn't chosen to speak to me about it. Umm whether that is because I am unapproachable, not there, because I was his line manager or what reason, I don't know. So yes, people do sometimes talk about it, I don't think that they avoid it. (Pause)

DA: OK, fine. Do you think that feelings of anxiety actually affect the decisions and judgements of people within the organisation?

P4: Yes, I do.

DA: Can you give me an example?

P4: I am not sure that I can actually give a specific example. I mean, well, yeah, I can, generally. So, last year, we were going through situation where, I talked about the joint venture and we were also seeking new funding for the business. We were in a position that if we hadn't got the funding in place, the organisation, we would have been out of business essentially. So that caused a certain amount of anxiety last year. There were only three people in the organisation who knew about it. Myself, the CEO and the Finance Director effectively. So, there were times where, we knew that assuming that things went ahead we needed to recruit people into the business. I think there were some differences of views. Again, I tend to be, my nature is, I am a fairly cautious person, I like everything planned out. So, in this situation, my anxiety about the future of the organisation will cause me not to take risks in terms of saying right we who should recruit more people because when we get funding we are going to need them in place. Umm, as compared to other people in the organisation. Our CEO is less risk averse, therefore, would naturally be less anxious about things and therefore would be more inclined to make a decision that says this will all be fine and say we need to go ahead and recruit people because we don't have any issues going forward. So yes, I think being anxious does impact it. I think the other side, with the amount of travel, time zone difference and tiredness also impact decisions. So, it's a combination of tiredness and anxiousness that sometimes impact on the way decisions are made. And I know that sometimes, I can get this combination of anxiety, tiredness, stress if you would, even a relatively simple decision, you have an email in front of you, I just can't make this decision and literally, if I get 2 hours sleep, get up and look at it again. I will go, oh its straight forward, we will do this. Umm so yeah.

DA: Could you give me an example where your anxiety has affected a decision that came out to be a positive decision?

P4: I am not sure I can specifically (laughter) Umm (pause) I am struggling to think of one. I think for me the anxiety more causes indecision rather than, and I suppose there potentially are circumstances where because of that, I mean I can't think of a specific one right now, I am sure there are ones where, I've delayed a decision because have not felt confident of making it because I have been anxious and then something else has happened and I have then gone, oh it's a good job that I didn't

decide that (laughter) or things have changed since then. But I can't think of a specific example of that right now.

DA: Or an example if you can think of about a situation where you have been anxious about not taking a decision and as a result it has had a negative impact?

P4: Umm, well I think again going back to decisions about recruitment where I've not been sure about the future of the business and how much money we are going to need for certain things, I've delayed recruitment which has meant more impact on me because invariably, I don't recruit for what I know that I could do myself. The issue is I can't do all of the things for the time I have available, and so it impacts on my time and on my ability to make other decisions as well as being able to do more within the business.

DA: How does staff within the organisation respond to other people's anxieties?

P4: I think that actually, people are quite supportive and so again in terms of what I have seen. Even from my own example, recently there was a situation where I was under a lot of pressure in Bangladesh to extend my trip where I had already been out there two weeks. Umm other people in the organisation were aware that my natural tendency would be to do what I felt was right for the customer to my own expense and agree to stay out. Umm and so both the CEO and other people were in a friendly way putting pressure on me not to extend my trip and trying to make it possible or pushing as far as I could to make it back and supporting that decision. Even with as a pure black and white what's best for the company, it could have been easy to argue that I should have stayed out there. But they saw the situation that I was in, the anxiety, the stress of having to be away from home so much and putting the hours that I was putting. All felt very strongly and supported the position that I should actually keep the trip as planned and come back home. So, I think that that kind of decision does come. I think that people are aware and it's not just one or two people in the organisation travelling as well. A lot of people do, so that level of anxiety and stress caused by the travelling is something that there is a good awareness of. Therefore, people are quite supportive when I was in that position.

DA: Is there an anxiety situation where there is perhaps not enough awareness and perhaps people should be more aware?

P4: It would depend on how much people make us aware of their own condition again because. Some people spend a lot of their time travelling away from home and they are not in the office very much. Depending on what is expected from them while they are away and also their own personal circumstances in terms of family etc. Some people get affected by that more than others. So, it's difficult to say whether there are people that are struggling and particularly feeling anxious and nobody is aware or not. There isn't a mechanism where people can go, saying if you have any problems, bring it here as such. As an organisation, a lot of people who work there are STF1tians who have a period of time each morning, where people can pray and share concerns. Again, my experience of this is that in most cases people keep it more related to the specifics of work. As I say, it's difficult for me because I don't open up to others around me. I don't know how much other people

do, I do see other people will meet up after work and go to the pub and drink maybe they will open up more about things then. Maybe, I don't quite see it, I don't know. Umm but I think it is people's nature, some people are much more serve that others. People don't like to admit to weaknesses. There is always a certain amount of culture in the workplace where people feel they need to be seen to be coping with everything that's thrown at them.

DA: Are you or any staff in your organisation currently anxious about a particular situation?

P4: Yeah, there are, personally I am anxious about this project that I am working on which is due to launch in 2 weeks for which I am about to go out to Bangladesh tomorrow. Here is a general level of anxiety on how I manage that along the rest of the work that I am doing. Each of these projects that we are doing particularly with the joint venture project is very critical to the business. People are anxious about the delivery of the projects, revenue towards our business, the number of people that we have to sign up. The joint venture is being watched by our partners. There is a part of me that feels that there might be holes in it because of not able to give it the attention it deserves. And that is one of multiple projects that we have going on. So, people always have a certain level of anxiety around the things that they are delivering. Can they deliver on time and will they get the impact that is expected?

DA: In general, as the COO of an SME, what are the other key sort of areas or points would you say are points for anxiety? If you could give me a list?

P4: For an SME, I've worked in other SMEs before and I was also involved I start up about 14 years ago that I was involved with for 5 years. There is a certain amount that is the same there and here. You are rarely in position where you have large amounts of funding and cash. There is always a level of anxiety as of how long the cash will last. Even when you are a profitable business you are always having to manage the cash flow in and out of the business. That is always a level of anxiety and going back to recruitment, you always have to balance recruitment of people. The whole sort of balancing of resource is more challenging in an SME. I've worked in both SMEs and large organisation. In a large organisation, there is much more opportunity, if you are stretched in a particular area to go and find somewhere else in the business to help out on a short period of time. In an SME you've either got to deliver it with the people you've got, or you go out and invest in additional people. There is always generally a feeling that you haven't quite got enough people to do everything that needs to be done and so managing the priorities and knowing that you going to have to potentially leave some parts of the business to get on by itself and know that actually they could do better if they had your help but it's more important that you focus on somewhere else. Dealing with that is a challenge as well. And personally, I find that quite difficult.

(DA summarises points raised by P4 namely cash flow, balancing resources and prioritising).

P4: And also, as an SME accepting the opportunities that come even if you don't necessarily have the resources, whereas as a large organisation, you can afford to say no. As an SME you say yes and work out how you deliver it.

DA: Thank you. How would you describe the physical symptoms of anxiety that you have experienced?

P4: I guess difficulty sleeping; I wake up in the morning thinking about the issues at work. Umm, tiredness generally as a result of that. (Pause) Sometimes I do feel quite down, I would be reluctant to use the word depressed. Sometimes just feeling as if the weight of the world is on your shoulders. Personally, I find it difficult if I feel that I am not delivering to the best of my ability. That makes me feel quite sad that things are not delivered as well as they should be. Yeah.

DA: Are those the personal expectations of you?

P4: Yeah, I do set very high expectations on myself. it impacts on my family, then I feel like I am letting the family down, then it's a bit of a vicious circle, because if I am anxious about something from a work point of view, I tend to try and work harder and you get sucked in. There is always more to be done and part of the symptom is that I work harder and do more hours in the day and cope with less sleep. Yeah (Pause).

DA: (DA concludes interview by confirming name of organisation, number of employees, gender etc. and closes interview by thanking P4).

SME EBO Interview Transcript- P5- SMALL- EBO

Interviewer Name: Dee Allen (**DA**)

Interviewee Name: P5

At the start of the recorded interview, DA made the formal introductions and confirmed that the interview consent form has been signed by the participant. Then the interview began as follows:

DA: Can you tell me a bit about yourself, your organisation and the role you play in the organisation please?

P5: Well the organisation itself is along, very long established business. It's been going since 1901. It's been in the same family since 1901 and in the same building. In 1850 something, there were twelve houses permitted to be built on Regents Street in the centre of Cheltenham. One of which was my Great Grandfather's. Of course it was his residential home and it turned into partly a business, which started out as tailoring, and only tailoring. Then my grandfather was born there as well and he carried on the tradition of tailoring. Then soon enough when my father was sixteen he came in and the business then started to evolve a little bit. It moved from tailoring into more general top end retail, along with other things. Then my role came in, 13 years ago, where we then have established lots of other things, and lots of other contacts within the business retail world where we do suit making for lots of the top horse trainers. We have a huge ski division that we that we head up downstairs, obviously based there in the winter. We've established a very large hire business for dealing with people with weddings, black tie events, special events. And that brings us actually up to speed now. That's what we are doing now. Umm and I think it's what's really is great about it for us. Is that we're diverse. So in times of recession, things suffer. But because we are diverse, we cover our winter, we cover our summers, they sort of, they help each other. If one is down the other might be up. People can't, even though recession is here. They can't stop spending. They might for a while but you can't stop life. We still need. I still go and buy things; you will still go and buy things. And we hope that is you know the great thing for us.

DA: And so how many years has the business... **P5:** Since 1901

DA: Since 19091, wow amazing. And what's your role within the organisation?

P5: I manage the organisation. Umm, recently become partner with my parents who are also partners obviously. Umm and that is what I think that allows; is that you are all focused on what you need to do. Cause the end result is a family related result. That is fundamental to us and our staff that we have. They come on board at the beginning and they're very (pause). Lots of junior staff are quite shy, not very good with the public yet and soon enough, give it six or seven months with us, we sort of mould them a little bit, into what our customers expect from a family business like ours. You can go to the high street in any town you want and get bad service and

we've always tried to do the opposite. They're coming to Horace Barton's because (pause) and this is how we do it. Umm if they don't like that, ultimately they move on. Umm, but generally we tend to, we can mould them a bit. It becomes quite a..., they don't become a realistic member of the family, but they become part of the set up. We need them as well and without them, we haven't got a business.

DA: So, if I show you this chart, which sort of shows you the different definitions of SME businesses. One of them Micro SME with less than 10 employees, the next is the small, between let's say 11 and 49 employees, the larger one is seen as the medium size SME which would have between 50 and 250.

(Recording device stops; P5 says it's a micro SME with 8 staff. Recording restarts):

DA: So it's a micro SME with 8 staff. Are they all working within the premises?

P5: All working within the building yes.

DA: Fantastic. OK. This research interview is about anxiety within SMEs. And what I really want to do is find out your opinion, your perspective of anxiety within your organisation and beyond. And so, can you please tell me, what do you understand by the term anxiety?

P5: (Slight pause) I would probably put the term anxiety and I base this, I suppose knowledgeably around sport previously before I came into business. My previous career, I'm just gonna go back to that just briefly. My previous career was with the National Team Skiing and anxiety was the one word that we would all use between our management and our coaches to control anxiety. Whether you are a sportsman, whether you are playing golf. And you can take that into the business and control that anxiety. The way I would understand anxiety is not getting overworked, its keeping calm, keeping level headed when you got to make a decision and make sure it's the right decision. And anxiety is terrible for people. It stops them talking to the public. It stops them on a number of levels. Umm its quite eh debilitating. (Slight pause)

DA: OK, so based on what you understand by anxiety and on the actual consent form, we've also given you a brief and standard definition of anxiety as we see it.

(Pause to look at definition on the interview consent form and DA reads out the definition on the form and confirms P5's definition)

DA: So what do you say would make people anxious { about anxiety}. In your organisation, what would make people anxious?

P5: Certain times of year would make the staff anxious. In that the pressure in certain times of the year for us, in the retail sector, for example, STF1tmas. It's a time of the year where people, they don't have much time, they want to spend, but they don't have much time, but they still want the service. And especially with younger staff, their anxiety goes up another level. Not only on the basis that they are dealing with customers. Their anxiety levels go up because they are dealing with bosses that may be on their back, wanting results. Now, whether we like it or not at whatever level we are, of anxiety within our small business. You got myself, and

above myself officially, would be Father who would expect certain results at certain times of the year and below me, my staff would expect results from me. So their anxiety is based around, I suppose, very busy times of the year. March, for us its March races and for us it's the summer now with people's weddings. It's a huge day for people's weddings. Not only are they suffering with anxiety cause they are just about to get married. We are as well, to make sure we get it right for them. And that creates a form of pressure. But I think anxiety also creates a form of perfection really. Cause if you are nervous, and you need to be, a little bit, to get things right for people. I think that is important. If you are not anxious, you don't suffer with it, and you're not bothered and get flippant. You are probably not giving them a service they deserve. And I am only talking about anxiety in retail. And our customers you know, you have to make sure that they don't pick on that. They, our staff got to be confident and trying. All junior staff get nervous and anxious and I think when they are with us and they've been with us for a while, that diminishes. We can really get rid of that. But the more we let them do, the more confident they get and I think the anxiety levels deplete then.

DA: So what makes you anxious?

P5: Within the retail or generally?

DA: In your business.

P5: Umm probably, certainly wouldn't be the customers because I've been there long enough to know what the customers want.

(Recording device stops. Recording restarts DA and P5 mutter about device. DA confirms its working and P5 continues):

P5: My own level of anxiety would probably be Father. If, you know, certain times of the year again, when we are all under a bit of pressure. Umm like any business you own, certain anxieties come from making sure you keep the business going. That is first and foremost umm (pause). It's a lovely thing working for yourself in one form but you still have to produce. You can't just turn up to work and leave work. It's your little baby to keep running.

DA: So when you say produce, what do you mean?

P5: We've got to make sure that we produce the turnover we need, to keep our staff employed. All those are forms of anxiety that come from the top and filter down. Not that they would affect our staff, but would affect as us as partners and managers. Umm other anxieties for me within the business, umm no probably quite balanced on other things really. It would relate to finance within the business and yeah other managers really.

DA: Other managers, what do you mean other managers?

P5: Like Father, Mother, I mean ultimately you have a head partner which would be Father. Umm and if things go wrong, he will tell me and I suppose that produces some form of anxiety. But I am quite used to dealing with it. I actually get to a, you get to a point in any business and you say how serious is this? Is it worth that

anxiety? Then probably not. And you can relax more. Most anxieties, issues, are people mind-sets of what their brain is telling them. They get very worked up, don't they? Very nervous, can't speak, hot hands, any of that is anxiety based.

DA: Does this mean that people in your organisation talk about their anxieties?

P5: No, I wouldn't say we do Dee, because we are not a business that would for example have an HR department. We're very traditional, quite old school. In the fact that if you had an issue, you probably wouldn't go to the office and discuss it with our HR department because we haven't got one. If you've got an issue or our staff has, they would say "[P5], *a bit worried about that*". *Could you help me? Is there a way round it? Can I do it that way or do I speak to your dad.* And It's very nice where they've become like a family figure. They can talk direct to us and for us that is vital. Umm have to say that not many of them ever talk about anxiety. They don't need to, cause you can tell when they are under pressure. And then Father and I have a chat. I am slightly; I work very differently from the way he would work. He is very old school. Tells it as it is. Tells it very straight. Whereas, if I feel my staff are under pressure. I'll sit them down, Jason, whoever. *Look we need to do that, that way.* I try and soften it round. And without a shadow of a doubt, the result is better. One you've made them less anxious, the anxiety goes, rather than steaming into them. Their anxiety levels go up drastically, when my dad has a go. {Umm that's just the way it is I suppose}.

DA: So you are saying that there is a different style of leadership [in the organisation]?

P5: Definitely a different style of leadership

DA: And is it generational?

P5: Generational without a shadow of a doubt it's generational. And I am not saying that his leadership hasn't worked. Cause it has and it's worked very well. Even I sometimes think, you know Dad you can' say that. It's worked for him for years.

DA: How does your staff respond to his style of dealing with people's anxiety or when they are under pressure?

P5: Ironically Dee, they, even if it's a shock to them initially because he is so straight talking to them, after a time, they think this is the Richard Barton way. Ironically most of the staff we've had, most of them, nearly all of them come back for a chat, come in for lunch, it's quite bizarre. They've actually enjoyed it and it's given them a grounding to move for their next job.

DA: I suppose you are saying that as it is a family business, the dynamics of dealing with anxiety are so much easier.

P5: It's definitely easier, you don't have to go through the loopholes too. you know if you work for a huge firm, you have to go and talk to your manager in your department and then another manager in another one, If any of our staff is under pressure, they can say Richard I feel under pressure, Giles I feel under pressure, that's alright, let's get round it ten. They have an instant answer, and it is instant

Dee, (chuckles)its immediate. And again, because we are a small firm we can see that business anyway, we can see when they are struggling, we can see when they are uncomfortable and that is part of... I am a firm believer that if you train the staff well, the anxiety levels drop. Generally speaking, if you go into something or I go unto something that we are unsure about or have never been trained about, the anxiety levels will go higher. Which is why their anxiety levels are high when they first start the job, like anybody but they will soon go, once they know what they are doing.

DA: Fascinating, very interesting, you are saying that training the staff well, actually helps them to deal with anxiety.

P5: Yes, Umm if I get one of the race trainers, horse race trainers in the shop and if I send one of my juniors, go and see him, go and see Paul Nichols, he wants a three piece suit made by us and he wants you to go to his yard, down in Ditchie. The anxiety will go through the roof and until he is ready to deal with that person, now when they first join us we let them deal with certain people that we think their anxiety can cope with that may be of the same genre as them. Or if somebody is coming in that, is one of our top end customers, that he wouldn't be used to seeing, then he needs to be trained on how to deal with that person which he has.. I mean, Jason one of our latest ones who has now been with us probably 8 months now, when he arrived, he was timid, very, very timid, he was suffering with. Not only was he timid, he was 6ft 6in and had an issue in himself that he also had to battle.. Which also created anxiety? He was very aware of how huge he is and you can see it, in his mind. That, he was very conscious and if he is conscious about himself, then its anxiety, it's got to be up there. So, we did other things for him, not only did we train him properly, but simple things in retail, you got a junior member of staff coming in, this may sound silly but in the retail business, he is 6ft 6 plus, his Jacket is too short in the sleeves, his trousers too short. Let's get him as a package, what do we need to do to make him feel better? So, we bought him a new suit that now fits him and he now feels part of our establishment because we paid for it and got it looking very smart. His nervousness is going because he feels better in himself and therefore the anxiety levels have diminished a bit. And he is now very very capable. If we are not there, I am not saying that he would be able to deal with some of our customers, but lots he can. And the customer response, where you think your staff suffer with anxiety when you are around as the boss, it is very different from how they perform when you are not around, in our business. So the only feedback we can get is feedback from our customers. Now I would say, sometimes I would say, Jason don't worry I will deal with the customer, but the customer would say, oh there is that lovely young man that you have there, good we broken the ice. The nature of the beast in retail is that when you've broken the ice, they move on. Unfortunately, you lose them eventually because they are not partners, they are not going to go any further up the firm really because it is a small firm. There is a ceiling limit for them. So these accept where they are and stay.

DA: So the next question is, do people actually avoid talking about anxiety?

P5: No, I certainly wouldn't, Mother certainly wouldn't. Father who as I say he is quite old school, he would give you the answer, as they do, "he cannot be suffering with that" well Dad he clearly is suffering from it but he wouldn't have told you But think that's eh sort of flip coin, really, in that I think, perhaps, Father wouldn't know what answer to give the young lad who is suffering from it... but.. I have to say, no one has said, [Father's name] I am suffering with anxiety, if it was spoken about, we will deal with it, definitely. (Slight Pause) He himself, when we are all under pressure, perhaps at STF1tmas, no one is immune from anxiety and anybody who thinks they are, you know they just can't be. We would be not human, if we could cope with that all the time. And if we are all brilliant at that, if you were in sports, we will all be top end sports people. If we didn't suffer with nerves, we will all be [slight pause]. Anxiety produces or not produces some very top end business people that can give speeches and do all the rest of it like some top end sports people. Umm... and getting back to anxiety with sport, when I was in sport, I would know in the morning when my anxiety levels was too high to perform that day. And I think that's very true in the business world, if we got an event on and you feel good, you will do the business.

DA: So if you felt the anxiety level was too high in business, how would that affect your decision making, your judgement?

P5: I think, I would have to establish why it was too high to start with. Why was it making it too high and how now can I deal with that? For example, if you were put up in front of some of the customers we deal with and they see that you were suffering with anxiety, their confidence in you as an individual goes because you are not showing them that. Anybody who suffers with anxiety, generally, they are not themselves are they? You can't relax, they can't be out there giving that chat. I think that gets seen, I think people see that...umm... normally then you've lost that person I think. They want to deal with somebody that perhaps is confident enough. And in our establishment, sometimes people come in that don't know themselves. Right, what do I need to look like for that event? Now if you've got somebody suffering with it. "Ooh ooh, sir, sir" that's not good enough for a firm like ours, they are coming into us for advice, even if we feel anxious, they mustn't see it. There's got to be some form of clever camouflage. It's just controlling it, isn't it

DA: But in terms of the business itself, the company, do you feel that anxiety has affected business decisions for the good or for the bad?

P5: Umm I think if anything, potentially, for the good. Cause anxiety comes nerves, with all that the reason that you are nervous is potentially, you've got a deal on. If you haven't got that maybe, you do not have the drive to do the deal. For me anxiety, produces a form of adrenalin. And if you haven't got the adrenalin, there is nothing at the other end worth doing. And Dee in retail, I don't think if this is a poor example or not. But next to our retail building, another building came up next door. Now our anxiety was there and our nerves, because we wanted to buy it, maybe to expand our business. So the anxiety levels there and as far as perhaps, financing it, all of

those things. But without that feeling in your body, you don't have the drive to finish it. So we thought right, here is the potential, we know we are going to be nervous for six months when we carry this deal through, but we want it enough, so let's go for it. And during that period, you have anxiety, you've got to. Umm there was a period, it's very funny how different people deal with anxiety. An example, the Everyman Theatre which is in Regent's Street, wanted to buy both of our buildings and wanted to knock through to extend the theatre. For café, bars, theatre, restaurant all that types of things. Now my Father, who doesn't deal with it very well, he gets very nervous, in an environment, that would be a boardroom or somewhere like that and he would be the first one to admit it. So managers come from the theatre to talk about the purchase, my answer and Father says to me "Giles now you go". So I went. Now I feel that I've, whether it's through school or otherwise, he gave me that opportunity to deal and get used to dealing with life I think. And the consequence of that is and he would say the same, anxiety wise, I would deal with it a lot better than him. He's very emm, his anxiety comes across as being impatient. He is not impatient, he is anxious, whether that be an after dinner speech or what, "Giles I want to, it's time to , I'm ready to go. Come on, we've done our bit now, we're off" Whereas, I'm able to, I try and relax to enjoy that event or that deal that is on and try and control the anxiety.

DA: Are you saying that your education and sporting experience has helped you to deal with anxiety a bit better?

P5: Absolutely without a doubt. For us as a family, our daughter now at school at Berkhamstead . It's all about the opportunity we can give her. And sport, being involved in teams, individual sports. I suppose to a degree, anxiety can get squashed by somebody who is confident. Would you agree with that? Generally speaking, people who are very bad in anxiety, perhaps are not very confident in themselves, I think. Which is why lots of sports people, they get nervous before events. They would be inhuman if they didn't. But still very confident. They would still do that after dinner speech without thinking about it, I think its inbuilt, but you can train it. I am a firm believer that you either have that or its harder work to train it into you. It's either a natural thing.

DA: So do you believe that therefore, your levels of dealing with anxiety has affected your business decisions in a positive way?

P5: Yes, definitely. It's definitely given me the drive. Actually along with anxiety comes a buzz. This was the adrenalin I mentioned. You might not enjoy it at the time, but when the deal is done, you say actually, I don't mind that feeling again, feel a bit nervous, feel on edge a bit and that's the only way you can produce a result, I think.

DA: Is there any example where your anxiety has led to a not so positive decision?

P5: Within business?

DA: Yes, within business.

P5: Probably not within the business, but certainly within sports definitely, where the anxiety levels have gone too high. The nerves are uncontrolled and that has created tension that you needed to. I think in business its slightly more controlled, that within the business environment, if you've got something that is making you anxious, you could go down the road and maybe for three or four days, you can say actually, I've overdone that anxiety, I've got to control this deal and bring it back and still get the results. Sports anxiety, it's too late. You've either fluffed it or you have done well. You don't get that period. Within our business of retail, we could have months to think about potentially something that was on. I think that gives you time to manage the anxiety really. Umm it's not very often that you are forced into a position where you have to. Umm I think anxiety is actually the unknown. People don't know what is coming and that is the cause of it. Interestingly in our business we always say and I am a firm believer. If I have my suit on, shirt and tie and I am dealing with one of our top end customers my anxiety levels aren't there. Cause I know I look smart and you are already ahead of the game. So the confidence is there , so the nerves go, cause you know you feel good. If you try and deal with that same customer, as bizarre as this sounds, in retail, with an open neck shirt and a pair of chinos on he's probably got the upper hand on you. When I've got the suit on , I'm winning already, he's coming in to our establishment to have the service. If I feel good about giving him that service, no anxiety. Sometimes, if I dress casually, even myself, I don't feel right. It doesn't feel quite right. I'm not smart enough to take this chap on.

DA: Quite interesting. So, is this a unique thing because it's in the retail sector, the dressing is important in how you express yourself?

P5: Yes, if they look upon to you as a top end retail business and you look smart. Their feeling is that they are going to walk out of that store looking the same. These guys know what they are doing, they've got the right colours on, they are all co-ordinated, you know. Umm its very rare that you see a top end business person without a collar or tie. Richard Branson pulls it off, there aren't many. The Alan Sugars, the Donald trumps are always collar and tie. And I can tell you in our place the biggest selling colour to wear as a shirt from retail selling is blue.

DA: Wow, interesting.

P5: I am telling you. People have, people's vision, they look at that colour for some reason, its looks very sharp, against blazers, nice tie, honestly Dee, that's the biggest selling colour to wear as a retailer

DA: So you are basically saying that by wearing those colours, it actually affects the way you feel about yourself and your anxiety levels as well?

P5: Yes

DA: Interesting, very fascinating for me. Another question, how do people in your organisation respond to other people's anxiety within the organisation? In other words, you've got up to 10 staff members, how do they respond to each other's anxieties?

P5: I don't think, for example if we have got the accountants on a Tuesday and the tailors work next door in a separate room. I don't necessarily think, they'd be aware of each other's anxieties. Umm we may have taken something up to our tailor upstairs that we want in 20 minutes time. That's put him under pressure. I don't think, the only people who would be aware of his anxiety would be us as the bosses cause we put him under that position. Our junior staff would see it cause they also take stuff up there. They wouldn't necessarily comment on it. They might come down and say " ooh Veto is not very happy today" and I would say that I need him to finish that job I half an hour. Certainly most staff wouldn't comment on it, eh only because it is probably not there position to. They would see it, umm they may say to us yeah, about the stress. But ultimately, we would and I think lots of anxiety within a firm, especially in a small one. If you've got 8 people, you as the boss, to a degree cause either cause that anxiety or not. So if we are chasing round the place in busy period, and putting our staff under pressure, there anxiety levels are going to go up. But they all feel the same. Whether they talk about it themselves when we are not there, possibly they're human. Umm where it is slightly different for us Dee is that most of our staff or 40% of them are family based, mother, father and myself. So if we feel and I have explained it to the father, that you've got to speak to them normally, to keep their anxiety levels down and their performance up. The way you speak to them sometimes, knocks their confidence, once the confidence goes, anxiety. Umm some days are our junior lad will go upstairs to the tailoring room and Veto will make a comment to me and he has done. "Is Jason alright today? He hasn't said much" not because he hasn't been told off, it's just the way he is. And this is what we do over a period of time is instil that confidence in them.

DA: So Veto who is another member of staff

P5 : (Interrupts) he's our tailor yes.

DA He would talk about Jason who is also another member of staff?

P5: Yes

DA: Are you currently anxious about something in particular?

P5: Umm, the only thing that we are always, we are not anxious about it. We are very lucky that our business, and the building is paid for. Cause we've been there a long time. Now if we were in a position where we are paying rent, that creates huge anxiety because if the business isn't coming in we are not paying the rent and this is why you are seeing so many shops shutting. Umm I have to say that within our business, most of our anxiety, nerves, would be performance based for the public. Make sure we are producing the best we can for them. That is probably, my main anxiety. Father's will be slightly different because he is closer to the bank side of it. Making sure the business is ticking that way. I'm closer to the floor, making sure staff are working, they're happy. Umm generally, I think the anxiety levels are quite good.

DA: As a final question, as somebody who is a managing partner of an SME, what examples could you give me as key reasons why SME business owners may become anxious? If you could give me a list, that would be useful ?

P5: Why they would become anxious. Staff loss, puts an awful lot of pressure on the staff you've got remaining, finance, poor performance, customer care, I suppose ultimately, turnover, making sure that business is coming in. if I is not, why isn't it ? Umm sometimes for us, during recession, you know have we done something wrong, the recession is here, it affects everybody. It's what we do , and it's a way to keep that anxiety levels down. If you know you've produced your best and you've given that customer your best, again, you know you've done a good job, so those levels go down. There's so many ways of getting that anxiety down and a very good way for us, in one section of our business which is a large hire section and we are preparing people's clothes on a weekly basis for weddings, ascot in June, big huge events. To get the anxiety levels down to make sure everybody is feeling better, we prep earlier. Now if we can pre 2 weeks before that event, we've got lots of time, if something then goes wrong, we've still got time. And I think, what you are studying Dee, the longer you leave things and don't sort it out, those levels really go up. If you leave yourself 2 days to spare for something, you haven't got long. Prepping early is important.

DA: Ok brilliant, is there anything else that you would like to say that I have not mentioned that you think will be relevant to this research?

P5: If I was going to say one thing about this research that we haven't mentioned which is really important. Sometimes people's anxiety outside of the workplace, affects what they do in that work place. So quite often, we don't know why, especially with younger staff. So if they've had a weekend at home, and you see them on a Monday, they are very different from what they are on Monday from what they were on a Friday. The anxiety levels outside of their workplace and how that affects them in the work place. So what happens in their day to day life, during the weekend for example which makes them come in on Monday like a Zombie. Sometimes we've asked Jason the question, Jason what on earth did you do on Sunday cause you haven't woken up yet at 12 O'clock on a Monday. When you come into this work place you have to be ready to go because the customers are ready. They are not bothered what you did at the weekend, why are you slow, why are you quiet. And we are all sufferers. For example, at the moment for me personally, now as the manager of our store, I've got other things going on outside of the business, to do with development , a building that is hopefully happening in our garden. Now when I arrive at the workplace, father doesn't want me to not be on the ball because I am thinking about that. I think that as soon as they arrive where they are working, they have got to somehow, forget what has made them anxious over the weekend, whether that be that they split up with their girlfriend or whatever it might be and that of course is very conducive with younger staff. Has he split up with his girlfriend and does he want to talk about it. And actually for us, that is where Mother is very good. She is there, if they feel they want to talk to a mother figure as it were, they will chat with her. And once that has been established, what the problem is, again, they are back on board. We've got to clear their mid before they can even start performing for us and we know when they are not performing.

DA: Fantastic, so, do you feel that the age issue is relevant here because staff are a bit younger?

P5: I think so. The junior member of staff would have a very different weekend than an older member of staff. An older member of staff, mid -thirties might have family and a normal weekend. A junior member of staff, may or may not have trouble at home, might have trouble with girlfriends probably ben out drinking on Saturday, there's lots of things. And when they arrive, they feel it as well. They know if they are not on form on not. As bosses you recognise it instantly, cause you know a how good they are when they are good.

DA: So are you saying that the way people deal with anxiety is relation to their age within your organisation?

P5: Yes

DA: But most importantly, you are saying that people will bring their anxieties from outside the work place and bring into their work and that we need to consider that?

P5: Yes, we need to consider that, what is that anxiety, what caused it, how serious is it. I had a member of staff working for me for 5 years, who, hypochondriac is slightly a strong word but he would sit there and say "Giles can I talk to you for a minute" I would say what would you like to talk about? "I've got this pain in my one arm" and he would say lots of things. James you are fine. Cause if you are worried highly, he would say he suffers with it. He suffers with anxiety now. He's moved on from us, he was with us for 5 or 6 years, when he first arrived, honestly Dee, he couldn't have talked to you at all. When he left us, he was dealing with our top end customers, in a tweed suit, he was suited lovely. And he's moved on and he is doing very well ehh with a proxy finance company. He's developed and he's learnt an immense amount. He would come in twice a week, have a chat. Umm different people are affected by different levels aren't they? So what you might suffer with, somebody else might not think it's very serious. If it actually were the anxiety, we would say to Leah our daughter, Leah, you know, just do your best honey, you don't need to be nervous about it. The result is what it is. Umm there's lots worst things happening.

DA: So what you are saying if I'm correct is that because it is a family business, you work with staff as if they were family?

P5: We do. That works brilliantly. I think another great thing for us, is if they are worried about something and they choose to speak to us, we don't increase their anxiety levels, I would take them to our back room to talk. And it means they could do it anytime. They are not on a "ooh to talk to Richard or Giles, I've got to book in" cause again all those things increase nerves, tension. So if they want to chat to us, they would say "oh by the way Giles, do you think this is ok"? And within 30 seconds we've given them an answer. (Pause)

DA: Great, ok that it. I've got some factual questions for you to confirm. Your position in the organisation is managing Partner, how many years, you've been there for 13 years?

P5: 13 years

DA (Confirms name of organisation, number of employees, gender and closes interview by thanking P5).

DA: My name is Dee Allen. I'm conducting this research interview on behalf of the University of Gloucestershire. It's on anxiety within SMEs. I've got here with me Martin and Martin is going to be talking to me about himself soon, about his organisation and his views on anxiety within SMEs. I have sat with Martin to look at the interview consent form which he has signed and agreed with the terms, just confirming that it's all confidential and that his rights to privacy are protected and that this interview is mainly just for this research on anxiety within SMEs.

So P8, thank you for agreeing to take part in this research interview.

P8: That's okay.

DA: And can I just get you to introduce yourself and talk to me a bit about your organisation and what you do within your organisation.

P8: Sure. So my name is [P8]. I'm Director of [Name of Organisation] which I set up in 2006. So we've done a number of assignments, we focus on business change consulting and we've worked for different levels of organisation in public, in private sector implementing business change, very often IT enabled change and linked to the organisation's strategic objectives. So that's basically what the organisation does. So we work with partnerships, companies like Airbus, West Midlands Police and different companies like that. We're currently working for Capita on mobile data solutions for police forces.

DA: Okay, fantastic. In terms of the size of your SME I've got 3 criteria to choose from, we've got a micro SME which has under 10 employees.

P8: That's us.

DA: So you're a micro SME?

P8: We are.

DA: Okay, fantastic. So how many people work within your organisation or in your organisation?

P8: There's just 2 but we use associates. So for example when I worked with West Midlands Police, quite a big organisation, the second biggest police force in the UK with 14,000 employees I had an associate in there and we were running 4 of their strategic projects.

DA: So this interview, this research is about anxiety within SMEs. What do you understand by the term anxiety?

P8: Well before you arrived I looked at your definition again so yes I would agree with what that basic definition says about worry or concern, unease. So yes that an imminent event or something with a certain outcome, so yes I would agree with that basic definition to be honest.

DA: As the director of a micro SME what do you think makes you anxious?

P8: When we had that session [referring to pilot focus group], the thing that I highlighted mainly is sort of where the next assignment is coming from. So in terms of having a pipeline of opportunities, potential assignments, that probably is the biggest thing. So when was it? 2011? Yes, 2011/12 had quite a bad year so setting up the company at the start of the worst recession since the 30s has been great timing really! But we've done pretty well apart from the one year where everything we tried to do just didn't work. So I'd say that was a pretty anxious time to be honest.

DA: So when did you start the company?

P8: In 2006.

DA: 2006.

P8: Yes.

DA: Okay can you please explain what actually made you really anxious, when you said it was an anxious time. What are the real causes of your anxiety then?

P8: Well during that period of time we didn't - we were working on a number of opportunities with potential clients and none of them, literally none of them happened. So that was very, very frustrating. So there were 3 major things going on, so it wasn't

like we weren't doing anything and we were doing mailshots and contact management, trying to get other assignments. But those 3 major opportunities just didn't come off.

DA: How did you feel? How did that make you feel during that time?

P8: Um. I mean I'm pretty confident in my own ability and what we do as an organisation so - but you do start questioning what you do I suppose. And looking back, probably wasn't focused enough. So I would say if you go through that period what you learn from it. So I probably instead of focusing on my contacts and specific assignments I sort of got dragged into looking at interim roles through agencies that I know I'm absolutely useless anyway, you know, job agencies. But it got into a bit of a worry about getting some work, so that's why I did it. And I should have just not bothered. I shouldn't have wasted 5 minutes on that area, looking at jobs through agencies. I should have just gone on focusing on assignments through my company.

DA: Okay, so you are saying that you were anxious about the situation so you began to look for interim roles. Yes.

P8: Well yes because it comes down to money at the end of the day, so we ended up using a lot of our own money because there was nothing coming in. So, everyone's got bills, mortgage and all that sort of stuff and I suppose that's at the bottom of everything really.

DA: When you said we, who do you mean?

P8: That's me and my wife.

DA: Is your wife a partner in the business?

P8: Yes.

DA: Okay, all right. So did you talk about your feelings of anxiety with your business partner [or?] wife?

P8: Not in those terms. No not specifically using that term. Know about the concerns about not getting the assignments, talking about what we should do or what we should focus on and I suppose with those 3 things that were going on I had an expectation that at least one of them would happen and they just didn't. So that was quite weird really. And so one of them was people that I'd worked with before and they approached me and it just never happened. So that was quite weird because they

approached me to just do business change, process improvement and then it just never kind of happened. And we, so we had a contract but that has broken up now because nothing actually ever came from that. So I spent quite a lot of time on that and nothing came from it so that was pretty disappointing to be honest.

DA: And at that time how did you feel about the business itself?

P8: Well if you think about, oh I thought about I should have gone and looked for a full-time job. So you start, well I started thinking about all the other potential things you could do. So I think I even, yes I did, I did apply for a full-time job. So yes you think, oh yes am I doing the right thing? Should I go and do something else? So my background is in finance and then I went into IT and then I went into business change so - I'm a qualified accountant so I think, should I go back and do that even though I know it's boring. Oh I'll go back into IT, so yes I suppose your mind just wanders a bit and think about other possible opportunities. But when that period came to a close that was a year ago now, June 2012 that was just sort of that really and that's how it happened. And that was through a contact.

DA: So how did that happen?

P8: Well, I'd worked with - he was an associate when I was at West Midlands Police and when we finished there he went and got a full-time job with Hewlett Packard. His CV is obviously still out in the ether and he got approached by a company and he said, no I've got a full-time job now and he gave my name and I went for an interview the following day and got the job the same day. So that was weird. Like nothing for so long and then a phone call out of the blue, got passed on and then go the following day and they offer it you the same day which is just weird.

DA: Amazing. Was it a consultancy role?

P8: So that was about business change. They would do, the company was doing a bid into four police forces so because I had police experience they liked that and it was being involved in that big team but doing the transformation and programme and project management for the bid. So that's what I did but when I started they gave me another - asked me if I wanted to do another assignment as well. So I did that as well, that's for the National Farmers Union, Stratford. So one thing led to another and then that got extended so it's just the way it happens, it's

weird. But that initial contact was through an agency so despite what I said there [you should see it?]. In that example it worked.

DA: **Amazing.**

P8: No it was, it was weird.

DA: **Very interesting. So -**

P8: So then I thought, I've done nothing. For the last year. Might as well have enjoyed the weather and done painting or something. You know what I mean? Why did I bother doing anything that year. Very strange.

DA: **So in that year, are you talking about 2011/2012?**

P8: So it was - yes. Yes it was 2011 into 2012.

DA: **So there were no other projects going in the organisations?**

P8: No, no. There were a couple of things. Well I did a little bit of work for British Computer Society but that was like peanuts money but it was to do something. I did a couple of days consultancy for the, what did they do, they do software for financial companies, I did a couple of days for them and then that was it.

DA: **So you started the business in 2006. Between 2011 and 12 was like the lowest point?**

P8: Mmm-huh.

DA: **In terms of hardly any work coming in, you're looking for even interim roles, even paid work?**

P8: Yes.

DA: **How did you feel about the business at that time? The business as a whole.**

P8: Not too good.

DA: **Were there any levels of anxiety there?**

P8: Oh yes of course. So fundamentally there's no work, there was no money coming in, so how are you going to pay the electric bills, phone bill, whatever, mortgage, all that stuff? So that would be the bottom line for anyone I would think unless you've got loads and loads of dosh somewhere.

DA: What was your level of anxiety during that time?

P8: Probably went up and down. So normally I'm - like I said, I'm confident in what I can do so that was always there but you do start questioning that. So yes, but I would say it goes up and down. So like when those 3 opportunities were going on you feel better about that but when nothing was happening with them, and I wasn't just waiting around, I was trying to make them work, that sort of anxiety level goes up and down really I think. So time and level.

DA: Do you think of anxiety actually affects your decision making and your judgement in your business?

P8: Essentially that's a good question. I haven't really thought that it did. Um. But yes maybe. So instead of sticking to what I should have stuck with like I said, I started looking at other things, so that was probably caused by that concern. So yes, yes I would say so. And even when I did that I knew that I shouldn't really do that and I should focus on the business and assignments that I wanted to do. So yes, yes I agree, I think it did. It made me look at things that really I knew I shouldn't be looking at.

DA: In terms of say a business decision you had to make, what role has anxiety played on the business decision, positive or negative?

P8: [Pause.] Yes, I'm - now I'm not so sure it did. I can't think of an example where it did other than what I've just said about going off and doing things I probably shouldn't have done. Or, the other thing I thought the other day is I should have just taken, done nothing for a month so like to clear your head probably, do something different for a month probably I should have done.

DA: Why do you think that? Why do you think you should have just done nothing for a month?

P8: Because I probably got bogged down in it. Bogged down thinking about it too much. Not probably, probably worrying, yes I mean the worry was there. But like we still went on holiday and things. So I suppose that was the break. So I still went to bed and still slept. Because I always do. Once my head is down that's it. I'm out. So I didn't have that kind of been staying up till 1, 2 and searching the internet and all that. I didn't do that. So it - the worry didn't tip over to that [level?], higher degree of anxiety then. I could still think I handled it okay.

DA: Did you talk about the worry with your business partner or anybody else?

P8: Yes, yes of course. And I've got a marketing associate that works with me. So that part, that was important and the person who worked with me, with police, in now HP, I meet up with him so a few people I meet up with. So not to throw all my worry on them, give them a big downer sort of thing but talk to them about it because I think if you don't have anyone else in your network I think you'd probably sink a bit.

DA: Did you feel that speaking to these other people in your network, how did that help you?

P8: Yes, it did help. So not, so to talk about them as well so it's not just about you and dumping all your worry off onto them. But looking back as well the guy who got the job in HP he said there was a role going in HP and looking back I should have taken that role but the rate was so absolutely awful that the trouble is when you do stuff and it's rate based it becomes your rate so you go for the next one and they say, what was your last rate and I know you can not tell the truth but looking back I should have done it. So some money would have been coming in on HP quite a good job, sorry quite a good company. So yes, I should, so the other thing about that at the time was thinking about things like that and thinking well if this happens again what are you going to do differently? So that [amounts to a?] home based role, so basically the money is the money you would have got. Because I was offered another job at Jaguar Land Rover and that also was an awful rate that your petrol money to backwards and forwards Coventry every day, and you had to be on site, would have come out of your daily rate. It really was awful so I turned that down as well. And now you see it back, it sounds ridiculous that you turned down roles. But that's why. But the HP thing if it was at home I would do it next time.

DA: So why do you feel that you -

P8: Oh the other thing I did - sorry I just thought what I did - my son's primary school was going through an academy conversion and they were in collaboration with 3 other schools and I got involved in that. So I was doing something and using that still rather than doing nothing.

DA: So you kept yourself busy.

P8: And doing something differently.

DA: Doing something different.

P8: Yes.

DA: But you also said that you turned down roles and looking back now you would have, you shouldn't have turned them down.

P8: No I shouldn't have turned the HP one down.

DA: So why did you feel that you had to turn them down?

P8: Because that was just because of the rate thing and I know that they are [state?] so recruiters and companies always use that to position you for the next one. And that was just ridiculous because one role might have nothing to do with the kind of work you're doing in the next role so I know it's ridiculous but that's what they do.

DA: So at that time your wife is also your business partner, does she share with you her feelings of anxiety over the business?

P8: Yes we did yes.

DA: And how did you respond to her feelings?

P8: Well go out and get a job! [General laughter.] Er. [Pause.] I can't remember now. Not that that [year's been?] put in the back of my mind. Because I've been able to tell you a lot about it. But we - probably the worst, worst bit about that period of time is we sold some stuff so that probably caused more disagreement than anything else. Because I said, we've got to sell some antiques that we'd got. And so that wasn't [cooly?] agreed. I did it.

DA: Was that to keep the business afloat? Or to keep you and your -

P8: Yes, yes. Because we had to get some money and use that for the business yes. So effectively loan money to the business. So that's what we did.

DA: So as a business partner you had disagreements about the solutions?

P8: Yes.

DA: Okay. And did that cause any levels of anxiety?

P8: Well HSBC weren't going to go and give me a load of money were they? Because I did contact HSBC because they're my bank for the company and I said, you know - what roles you got? So I met up with the account manager and she was okay and gave me a couple of contacts but it didn't lead to anything. So because I thought well you know you're my bank, why shouldn't you help me out? So she kind of got that but I don't think she was helpful enough. I mean I'm not saying yes she's got to get me a job but I think she could have done more. So I was thinking about things like that. But I didn't work. Like I said, it was that year of anything I thought of, just didn't work.

DA: And you said to you the highest level of anxiety was the worry that you had, the constant worry at that time?

P8: Yes. Financial worry, yes. Because that's why we go out to work isn't it really? Not only. I mean the assignments I'm doing at the moment. A bit of a risk. I was with NFUM still and wasn't particularly liking the work and then got another opportunity and so left NFUM who would extend my contract again, to go and do this other work because of the work. You know the content of the work. So if I'd done 22 days at NFUM I would be getting more money than I am now doing the work that I really like doing. So that's what I decided to do.

DA: How did you feel about that?

P8: Am I doing the right thing? Back to thinking about yes, the decision. Is that the right - but you don't know that until after a period of time. So yes I weighed it up and said, yes that's what I will do.

DA: Okay. So is there something within the business that you currently that you're anxious about?

P8: Yes. So the - I'm working with Capita at the moment and I've had a few bad experiences with them before, so they just worry me.

DA: Can you explain why they worry you?

P8: Just the way - they're a very big organisation now, they're like 3 billion turnover, got a lot of people and it sounds a bit arrogant I suppose but a lot of the people that I meet I don't think are very good. But it's down to them in the long run whether I'm still working with them or not. So you've got to work obviously I do work with them. But as an external consultancy they've got their

own consultants. They've got Capita Consulting is part of Capita so I'm kind of bit of an outsider and on this, these certain projects I'm working on Capita Consulting have said, why aren't you using us? And because they're using me. So that's a bit of a worry long-term. But I met up with the guy on Tuesday so yes we got on and want to make it work and everything. So yes that's a bit of a worry.

DA: So what do you think will happen? What's causing the worry? What do you think will happen to you, to your business?

P8: They will, that assignment will go. I mean there's a 3 month [notice?] I made sure there was a 3 month notice period in the contract so try to offset some of the risk. And the other bit of anxiety is the people that brought me in to do this work are leaving at the end of June. So a bit of worry.

DA: So how will - if the contract goes, how will that affect your business? And your levels of anxiety?

P8: So I'll need another assignment, which is what I'm working on at the moment. So that I've got some - so this is back to the pipeline, you know, what's coming next. So making sure there is something up my sleeve. So yes that's the main thing really, that's what I'm working on. But also to work with the other people that are the new managing director of this particular part of Capita, to work with them to show what I can do. Because I know the person who brought me in is leaving, so that the assignment carries on.

DA: So how are you responding to Capita in relation to this particular worry?

P8: Trying to be very positive.

DA: Do you feel that decisions that you are making are affected by this worry with Capita or not?

P8: Hmm.. No I don't think it is. How would - I'm not sure that I'd know that it was. So there's the being positive contributing that there is an underlying worry. But if you're doing contract work, stroke assignments and therefore shorter period of time, even though this contract was for a year there's always that underlying worry. I mean if you're a full-time employee of a big company these days, there's no job for life these days anyway. There was when I started working. People were in - I worked in Smiths

Industries, people were in that company from start to finish. So - like my dad. That's gone! So I mentioned my colleague who went into HP. He had got hassled from his wife about getting a permanent job and we both said, that doesn't exist anymore. So he might think he's in HP for the next 20 years. He probably won't be. You know divisions get sold off or HP could get acquired or loads of other different things. So that sort of scenario's gone. So I think that worry, underlying worry, maybe it's more accentuated if you're - got a small business or contact than if you're full-time. I don't know. Probably.

DA: So how does this worry affect the way you view your business currently?

P8: So I view - I mean I've always viewed the business pretty positively anyway but disappointed that, because you know the plan was to have a few employees by now. Well not necessarily employees but say 4, 3 or 4 associates who had pretty regular work and so that hasn't happened. So the development of the business hasn't happened. And so there's - during that period of time there's been a couple of opportunities, West Midlands Police being one, where at one point in time I was pretty certain I was going to get 3 or 4 people in there. But then a new CIO came in. So other things happened that were out of your control that can - obviously can affect what your plans were at the time. And that's what happen at West Mids. And with the assignments I'm doing for Capita at the moment they kind of haven't taken off because of some of the poor marketing aspects from Capita and again I've lined up another person because I thought we'd get 2 or 3 assignments concurrently. And so I've got somebody lined up but there's no assignments at the moment.

DA: So you've talked about having the -

P8: So sorry, so on those I'm dependant on those other people trying to contribute to that so part of that was, this solution is a mobile solution so it works on Blackberries and Windows mobile devices and they've got a lot of [applications?] in the police but they only keep talking about the police. And the new MD, he's an ex-policeman. So he only talks about police, so I've tried to extend that out to other markets because they can use the solution in other sectors. So I've tried to be influential and so instead of just sitting in the background moaning about it, I've tried to influence and say, have you thought about this into structure and health or whatever. So trying to be positive about it and influence it. But at the moment still being a bit of an outsider.

DA: And this is with Capita still?

P8: Capita yes.

DA: Do you have any other major clients you're working with?

P8: No.

DA: So they're the main clients you're working with?

P8: They are it at the moment. And that's been very tricky to do. I've had a couple that have overlapped. But I suppose it is just me and that's always been the challenge is to stop it being me doing it all and so getting other people. But it's been very tricky over the last years.

DA: So how do you feel knowing that it's just you and you're having to deal with all -

P8: Ups and downs. Get really cheesed off with it and then it's okay. So like the 2 assignments I've just done, they were really interesting. So that's good. The NFUM work was really boring so that wasn't good and that did my head in completely. So that - so yes it's just your ups and downs that [irritate it with?] it sometimes.

DA: So when you're feeling anxious and especially during the time when you were worried about work coming in and the pipeline you've got there - can you describe your physical state? How you feel physically during these times of anxiety?

P8: Physically I've always felt okay. So -

DA: Any other symptoms at all?

P8: No not that I've noticed, no. It'll be more in thinking about it. So -

DA: In terms of thinking about it, do you think about it for a period of time or do you just - how does the thinking -

P8: Yes I analyse everything too much. That's me. That's just what I do. So yes some of it just completely does your head in. Like I said, when I now do I always sleep. So that's a good thing. Does not keep me awake or - so you said physically. I don't think that has affected me like that. And there's other things going on. [So saying we focus on work?] there's other things outside of

work, family and social or whatever. So those things help I think. So if it was just - it's down to you isn't it? How you - so the word I like is resilience. I think a lot of people are not very resilient at all and I think I am pretty resilient. I mean there's what level of anxiety and when does anxiety go into stress? I don't - do I ever feel stressed? I think that word is overused.

DA: Do you think anxiety leads to stress?

P8: Could do.

DA: Would that be the same thing?

P8: But I will just, I prefer the word anxiety and that's linked, I would say that's possibly linked to personal resilience and how you personally deal with these ups and downs that we all go through and it's the different extents of the ups and downs. So yes I think that's down to you and for a multitude of reasons. Not sure it's about childhood or not. But it's for different reasons isn't it. I don't know what it is. So it is - I did a - quite a few years ago now I did a master's degree in change management which made me look at things a lot differently and that's possibly from a personal sort of change perspective I think that's probably helped.

DA: Do you think that master's degree in change management has helped you to cope with your anxieties? Or not help you to cope with anxieties?

P8: Mmm. [Pause.] Don't know. It just, it just made me think of things differently. So I probably wouldn't, I would not usually use the word anxiety. I'd probably use the word worry but it's the same thing basic thing. And I wouldn't use the word stress. And I've always thought about resilience, personal resilience. How you deal with things personally, why do you get up in the morning, those sort of things and like that period [inaudible] went through. If you go through that period of time what are you going to take out of it? So if it does happen again, what would you do differently and I do know what I'd do differently.

DA: That's good, so you reflect more on [inaudible].

P8: Yes, I'm very reflective. [Laughs.] Analytical and reflective. Is that good? I don't know.

DA: Okay so as an SME business, a micro SME, what would you describe as the key points which are trigger points for anxiety? For SME business owners like yourself?

P8: So the big thing is where is the next piece of work coming from for sure. I think - I mean that depends on your own personal circumstance. If you'd won the Lottery it don't matter! Okay. But it's got to be that.

DA: Yes, so where is the next [inaudible].

P8: Yes where is that yes. So that's down to your contacts, your networking which is - I'm not very good at that. Although I've got better. Yes, it's down to that really.

DA: Any other -

P8: And - sorry - and so trying to have several concurrent clients so you haven't just got one and you're just dependent on one. Which I have been in the main which has not been good.

DA: Any other points you think?

P8: [Pause.] We can get bogged down with the work so like I said just now, you've got the other aspects of family and your own social so it's, so whatever you want to call it - work life balance is. I do believe in that. So if I can not - if I can avoid working on Saturday and Sunday I will not work on a Saturday and Sunday. I don't want to work on Saturday and Sunday. I had to a couple of weeks ago but I don't [want to?] work on Saturday and Sunday so I think having that balance is really, really important and maybe that's quite difficult if you're a one man band or a small company to get that balance. Errr -

DA: When you say the balance, what do you mean?

P8: Well so, for example my son's 10. I'm picking him up from school tonight, I took him to school in the morning, he's got a sports day next week, I'll be at sports day. Very often you don't see the dads at all. So all through his primary schooling I've been there. So he'll want to play football tonight in the sun. So I will be playing football tonight so it's that sort of thing. Make sure we go out together so we do family stuff. So it isn't just work, work, work, work. And even when we had that rubbish year we still did that. Maybe we shouldn't have spent the money going on holiday but we did.

DA: [Inaudible.]

P8: So yes, I do think that. I mean I think it's used too much sometimes but I think it's important to have the balance. And

then the other thing is the small company is trying to grow the business and that's been very difficult I found.

DA: This growth, did you think it causes anxiety?

P8: Yes, sure.

DA: Can you give me an example of how?

P8: Who do you trust? Who do you rely on? So I think I've got some good colleagues I can talk to, bounce ideas off. When a colleague from quite a long time ago, I gave him a lot of work and he set up his company and I knew I could help him and his company and ended up giving quite a bit of free consultancy because he didn't want anyone else in his company. And then he sort of fell out with me which is ridiculous to be honest and I kind of thought I could really trust him. So that's always quite a worry.

DA: So trusting.

P8: Trusting potential colleagues or partners in your business or their business. So the other example was when I had that bad year, the people that I had worked before approached me about helping them and then just didn't deliver anything so I kind of like had trust in them and that just wasn't repaid at all. I wouldn't have wasted my time.

DA: You mentioned earlier that growing the business causes anxiety.

P8: It's done for me yes! [General laughter.] So like that - do you go away and get a big loan? [Inaudible.] Question mark. Then you'd have to pay back the loan so you'd need more work to pay off that, the interest of the loan for example. Back to what I said about you can collaborate with other companies, that I thought that's what we were going to do but it didn't happen because of they weren't quite telling me the truth. So yes like I said, trust or concern about overcommitting yourself. If you do it organically I haven't been able to do that. Just hasn't happened so that's been the economic climate. I've tried to partner with other consultancies but they were getting less work for their own people, so wouldn't subcontract any work. So yes it's been very difficult. But I still have not knocked that on the head.

DA: Okay. Why have you made that decision?

P8: Because I've still got a few years to work. So still want that as a goal.

DA: That is growing your business?

P8: Mmm. Yes.

DA: You've given me some trigger points which you thought of anxieties for a small business owner like yourself. Is there anything else which we've not discussed which you think is relevant to this discussion?

P8: I don't think so. So no insomnia. Good. Depressed moods, do I get depressed. I think depression is a bit of an overused word as well. Do you?

DA: Do I think depression?

P8: Depression.

DA: I don't really hear people talk about it actually.

P8: Okay, that's good. Tensions, fears, yes, yes. Insomnia, no. Difficulty concentrating - no I think, like I said should have had a bit of time out I think sometimes that's good. Refresh your thinking.

DA: So you're looking at the definition of, or symptoms of anxiety and you're thinking that these symptoms you don't really think that affects you in any way?

P8: Um. No I wouldn't say it hasn't affected me in any way.

DA: You were just saying depression no, insomnia no.

P8: Oh no not see depression, I would say that's quite - so if you've got a scale that's quite out to the right I would say. Insomnia, I don't know where that fits in really. [Multiple speakers - inaudible.]

DA: Some people when they've got anxiety they [multiple speakers - inaudible].

P8: They could not, they just can't sleep, yes. I'm just lucky I think. I'm not, no I'm not being funny I think I am lucky. I could put my head down here probably and probably go to sleep. So that's just luck. But anxious, yes. Tension? Yes. Fear? So yes I would say there - do you think they are similar things?

DA: Not really - I - this is really for your interpretation, to say this is what you think or not really.

P8: Yes sure, yes. Yes I would say yes, yes. I would definitely have those feelings. Not the others, yes.

DA: Just to get some more factual information, your position, you're the director?

P8: Yes.

DA: And how many years' experience do you have in your -

P8: Doing this sort of stuff?

DA: Yes.

P8: 20.

DA: 20 years. And what's the name of the organisation?

P8: [Name withheld] Consulting.

DA: Again, industry the sector, what would you describe?

P8: It doesn't matter. Well no, so we're in consultancy, so professional services. But work in any sector. It doesn't matter really.

DA: And the number of employees?

P8: That's 2 and we use associates where possible.

DA: And your gender? It's a question I always ask people at the end?

P8: What do we have to state it? Yes, I'm male.

DA: People always laugh at that question. Wonderful. Is there anything else you'd like to say about this interview, which you think is really important?

P8: No. I think I've said everything really.

DA: Brilliant, thank you for that.

P8: That's okay.

DA: Thank you so much Martin for your time.

P8: Okay.

DA: And like I said, we're going to go through the recordings, the recorded interview and just look at the themes that come out of this interview and analyse the information that you've given us and perhaps use it as part of our research and findings. So, thank you so much for this interview Martin.

P8: Okay, thanks a lot.

DA: Thank you.

End of Transcription

Appendix F: Sample Copies of SME Staff Interview Transcripts

SME Head of Department Interview Transcript

INTERVIEWEE: (HD2)

INTERVIEWER: D ALLEN (DA)

DA My name is D Allen and I'm conducting this research on experience of anxiety in SMEs and I'm focusing on [Name of organization] and I've got here with me one of the directors of [Name of organization] who's going to introduce herself in a minute and I just want to say thank you for signing the consent form and thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project as well as signing the form to let you know that everything we're going to be saying here is confidential and before we use any of the information we'll make sure we receive your consent and feedback. So ,thank you, can I get you to introduce yourself please.

HD2 OK so my name's [HD2] , I am global head of HR for the group. I started working for [Organization Name] very nearly three years ago now, not quite and took up the role of head of HR last year, that's it really, I guess.

DA Good so what were you doing before you took on this role?

HD2 OK so in the sort of 10 years prior to taking on this role. Oh what at [Name of organization] or at a previous employer?

DA Previous employer.

HD2 Previous employ. So three years ago I was working for a small business again but this was a charity so very much the voluntary sector. My role was HR director for that organisation but much smaller and no global responsibilities so it was all very localised in Cheltenham and it was up to about 70 people at the most we ever had working for us, so still an SME really.

DA OK brilliant and you've been here now for three years.

HD2 Been here three years.

DA And what positions have you had at [Name of organization] over the three years.

HD2 OK so prior to, so when I joined, I joined as a business partner, HR business partner for the Asia region and the UK region because there was an additional HR business partner in the Africa region and then the role came up of Head of HR to take over the whole lot and I put myself forward for that and was successful so yeah, just those two roles.

DA So you're now the global head of HR.

HD2 Global head of HR yeah.

DA Fantastic, can I confirm that you're female?

HD2 I am.

DA OK good. So within your HR department how many members of staff work in the team?

HD2 OK so it's not very many it's quite a small team really, we've got HR business partner, well it's an HR manager in the Africa region. We've got another HR

administrator in the Philippines and we're just recruiting for an HR administrator in India at the moment. So it's minimal really in terms of HR personnel. A lot of the work gets disseminated out to different country managers rather than specifically handled by HR. But obviously they come to us for advice and guidance. There's also an L & D consultant that's currently in post and he reports to me and that is it at the moment for the organisation.

DA OK so in total there's around probably 4, 5 of you?

HD2 4, 5, yeah 5 of us if you include me.

DA So how many countries are you located?

HD2 OK so, I'm just get the count right I think we're currently in 10 or 11 countries and we're just about to, well we've just launched in Vietnam so we're adding all the time, we're looking at Indonesia as well at the moment.

DA This research is part of a pilot research that we conducted on SMEs and in the initial pilot we spoke to the CEO and COO of [Name of organization] and what we're now trying to do is really understand things from the perspectives of other members of staff within the organisation such as yourself and one of the key focus is on the emotion of anxiety. So how would you describe anxiety?

HD2 Well I think it is very much about an expectation isn't it really it's about something that you are feeling that you have, a worry or concern or it's a fear sometimes that something's going to happen or something bad is going to happen, or something's not going to go the way you want it or you're going to be disappointed or whatever, but it's that, that's how I would describe anxiety, it's a fear.

DA OK brilliant. So you've completed this initial questionnaire which I put together for you to look at. In this questionnaire we list some of the things that could make you anxious, so for instance you've ticked customer problems, business partnership problems, failure of projects, senior managers some. So could I go through each one and if you could just give me an elaboration of sort of the issues there. So start with client customer problems.

HD2 Customer, well client and customer to me is everybody really in the workforce because they're all my clients if you like, customers. I don't, I'm inward facing as a role really, I don't have that many external clients although I do do some business with that. So there's potential at any point for there to be anxiety on my part because I'm having to deal with a difficult situation because in my role I have to deal with a lot of difficult situations, so whether that's retrenchment, going into disciplinary hearing, dealing with somebody's grievance or just the fact that somebody's unhappy and they want come and talk to you, can create anxiety and it's more to do with how I help resolve their issue and what I can do to help them and what I can't do. So it's really about, a concern about not being able to deal with their issue in the most appropriate way for whatever reason.

DA So, when you carry that concern about not being able to deal with the issues, how do you overcome that?

HD2 Well I suppose first of all it's understanding the issue clearly and carefully. It's making sure that you do fully understand it and that you're not making lots of assumptions based on previous examples of situations like that. It's really understanding it but also that you take a kind of well-rounded view of it because somebody comes to you with a problem perhaps it's about another member of staff, and you have to look at it subjectively, objectively, you can't, you can't sit there and side with that person until you've heard the other side of the story. So it's really about trying to retain some kind of balance and objectivity about what you're trying to do with, because often it's you know, got emotion running all the way through it and that's quite

difficult when you've got an emotional member of staff to you know not try and sort of support them, well you have to support them in a way that's appropriate.

DA OK good, brilliant. So, you've talked about client and the customer situations, how about the business partnership problems that you've also ticked. Can you give me an example?

HD2 So in an SME certainly one like this there are a lot of challenges with people having, different agendas, maybe not having fully bottomed out roles and responsibilities, people stepping on each other's toes, people not taking responsibility for things therefore falling down you know holes and a small business has the potential for a lot of in-fighting and I don't mean that that happens a lot but, I think it's worse in a smaller business than it would be in a big commercial because there's a lot of resource available in big commercial businesses and there isn't here. So, we're all under an awful lot of pressure to get the job done, and when you're under pressure then that's when the relationships suffer, because.

DA So when you talk about the relationship are you mean, talking about the relationships internally?

HD2 Yeah, yeah. I mean I think externally there are obviously lots of challenges as well but I don't, I'm not impacted by those in my role as much. It's more about how we work as a team and those kind of things and the other issues we've got is that in an SME, you're all expected to jump when something needs to be done so you, it's all hands to the deck sometimes if you know what I mean and what it means is things don't get done that should also get done. So my role in HR is to, to put in place all the mechanisms for managing people, appraising people you know developing people and those are the things that often get put to the end of the list when something's happening in the business so that has the potential to cause conflict. You know I can't, I can't push my agenda because there's other burning issues that need to be picked up. So that causes internal partnership issues.

DA So how do you resolve those internal partnership issues?

HD2 So, it's not easy to be honest I mean it's about dialogue it's about, everything come, in my mind everything comes back to good communication, being prepared to not only say what you need to say but also listen to other peoples' viewpoints. So, if I have got an issue I have to think about it carefully. I have to decide what outcome I need and go into a discussion in order to get that outcome if I can. But it's difficult because if other people have got other priorities, they're not always preparing, they're not always prepared to listen or not almost able to listen or give it the time that I think it needs.

DA OK. Interesting, so it's interesting to see that from your perspective that internal partnership issues would normally cause you anxiety.

HD2 Yeah and I think, I don't know if you've ever come across this in any business issue you've worked. There, there is an, there's a difficulty in aligning with HR strategy sometimes, some people don't see it as a strategic function they see HR as transactional and it's just pressing a few buttons and getting a few contracts out and, unfortunately well you need your senior management team to be completely behind your HR strategy because if you don't then you're pulling in different directions. So when, if you like the focus of a senior member of staff is on business development, or you know sales they don't really see the value of HR in the same way. So it gets put to the bottom of the very long list of things.

DA So linking that then because you've mentioned that senior managers, some are also reasons to make you anxious.

HD2 Stressors.

DA So can you give me an example of that.

HD2 So there are senior managers who, whose, who are incredibly planned and organised, we've got extremes here, we've got people who are so detailed so organised that, could be accused of micro management, then you've got other managers who are very sort of laissez faire in their approach to management. So you're having to appease both types of manager, but what you find is for the micro manager you find that nothing is every good enough, so whatever you do, there's always a comment or a something missing which causes anxiety because you think you can't satisfy them, you're consciously putting together work and trying to deliver but every time you deliver something there's always something wrong with it. So that's your micro manager.

In this the laissez faire is the one that says yeah, yeah, yeah get on with it, get on with it, get on with it but doesn't give you any guidance. So potentially what you end up with is putting something in place that he doesn't like, because he hasn't steered you in the right direction. So you've always got that conflict and it's really, really difficult to get it right. So if you're the type of person like me who struggles when they fail or doesn't, or struggles when they make a mistakes, gives myself a really hard time over it. I'm all the anxiety is always there, am I going to do enough to satisfy the micro manager and have I read a laissez faire manager right in terms of what he wants and that's really quite difficult. So there's always a level of anxiety there for me in terms of making sure that I, I deliver.

DA Could you share that?

HD2 With one of them and not the other (laughs).

DA What with the laissez faire one or the.

HD2 No with the micro manager actually and I'm getting better with the laissez faire one. I think if I put this into context again, the laissez faire one is one of the people who doesn't see the strategic importance of HR. So you have to be careful about how much you complain not complain, take issue, because your, you perhaps feel that your

relationship is not as good with him as it is with the other one in terms of them understanding your role.

DA We've without mentioning any names, you've talked about the micro manager and the laissez faire manager. Are you referring to the top managers within the organisation?

HD2 Yes.

DA I.e. the CEO and the COO.

HD2 Yeah.

DA OK.

HD2 And let me just say they're a really good balance for each other because you have, you kind of know who to go when you need a certain decision and so that helps in terms of moving the business forward. What it doesn't help with is sometimes they can't reach an agreement and they're, they're not on the same page so that can cause problems. So whilst it plies balance, it helps that you've got somebody who's on top of the detail and somebody who is less so but it can create its own issues.

DA OK interesting, another thing you mentioned is failure of projects.

HD2 Yeah, yeah, and this goes back to me not wanting to make a mistake, but we are under a lot of pressure I work ridiculously long hours which isn't good for anybody and I mentioned informally prior to this meeting to you that you know that's when you make mistakes. You do, you're trying to be all things to all men and I think that's the

issue with my role, because it's a small business I'm not just you know reward manager or, you know, performance management, I do everything. So I'm dealing with you know contracts of employment right the way through to strategic HR and it's quite hard to do that particularly as I only have a small team and I can't hand off anything to anybody or for certain things. So, the pressure is always there, the prospect of making a mistake is always there so, you know failure of a project would just be the living end, you know I, if I was working really, really hard on something and it didn't work, that would just be a real disaster from my point of view.

DA So do you mean an HR project or one of the projects that [Name of organization]'s.

HD2 So HR projects, so my responsibility, so my objectives if you like, my key objectives. Like the year if I didn't deliver on those at least to a certain extent, you're nobody's friend let's be honest but you know 80% 85% delivery you know is what you feel comfortable with, anything less than that just feels like you haven't really achieved.

DA Is that a figure that you've given yourself?

HD2 Yeah I guess so, I guess. But I suppose it's taken in context with what I see around the business because obviously I'm, again I'm one of these people that, I see, I see everything. I see all the salaries, I see peoples' objectives, I see what they're scored on and I suppose if everyone else is achieve, was achieving 50% and I was coming in at 70 then I would be fine with that. But it's about, it's got to be in context hasn't it really.

DA Interesting cos you've just mentioned that you see everything and the next question actually which you've also ticked is other people talk about feeling anxious in the organisation, you've said sometimes.

HD2 Sometimes.

DA So could you explain?

HD2 Some people might come and talk to me directly as an HR person they might just want to get things off their chests and that comes from right from the CEO right the way down. So I've had all manner of people come and talk to me about issues and it's really often it's just a sounding board really, they don't necessarily want a solution they just want to talk about it. So I have to, I have to work out what my role is each time so I can help and support, so that.

DA What kind of issues do they come?

HD2 So it could be about issues with another member of staff, about how best to deal with those issues or how to communicate. I mean I think ultimately people are really awful at communication we really aren't very good at it. So often you need help with how, how you're going to communicate something, rather than what you're going to do if you see what I mean cos you kind of know what you've got to do which is to go and deal with the situation but you just need help how you're going to start the conversation. So that's generally what I get involved in and it's well, "have you thought about this, have you thought about saying this, have you thought about you know, tackling it in a different way by using these words." So I think that's generally what happens so I might get a CEO might come to me and say "I've got this issue, how something was being dealt with and I need to address it with so and so" and we have a talk about how that might work. But similarly I could have you know a member of staff from any, you know I could get a Skype chat message from a call centre member of staff in Nigeria who's concerned about their salary.

You know and, they're anxious because they've got mouths to feed or whatever and it's how we deal with that and how we support them through that process and try and help them. So it's from one extreme to the other.

DA Great. So have you, are you currently anxious about a particular situation right now?

HD2 Yes.

DA Could you explain.

HD2 OK so the, the company is working flat out to develop its business and to increase revenue streams and as a result of that we're making cost efficiency savings in the head off here at the UK and that's something that we're all brought into so it's not a surprise. But what the impact of that is, is that I have to lose a member of staff from my team, who, but I still have to have the outcomes that they want. So that member of staff is my learning and development consultant, and but they're still expecting learning and development to take place, plus all the other things that I already do and I'm not getting any additional resource to do it. Now last year I was very clear that I couldn't sustain what I was doing long term, even with the L&D consultant and now I'm having to do it without.

So my concern is I don't know how much longer I can continue in this fashion and that I don't think I can achieve my objectives if I don't have some support to do so.

DA So have you shared that with the?

HD2 I've started to make, have discussions around it with, well I have shared it because I shared it at the point at which we raised these objectives and I was happy to sign up to my objectives because I know that's what needs to be done but with the caveat that I'm not sure how much momentum I would be able to get in the early part of the year without further support. So I've done that, but, I'm the sort of person that you know by hook or by crook I need to achieve those objectives and so, the only way I'm going to be able to do that is if I put in the extra hours and continue working it out at a level which I don't think is healthy personally.

DA So is this issue still causing you anxiety?

HD2 Yeah but it's not only me there are other people in the business that are, the trouble is, I can't go to my line manager, well I can, I can go to my line manager and say that but he's under the same pressures. So it's kind of like you just put up with it and get on with it, because, it's all got to be done, and there's no other, there's, I don't know what the, there is no answer to it really that. So it's almost like well we just have to get on with it.

DA So I'll link that, so is there any other member of staff that you can say even if it's their title who you'd say are also anxious about this particular situation or any other particular situation?

HD2 Yeah I mean, the chief operating officer.

DA Anybody else anxious about?

HD2 Head of technology. Development manager. To an extent probably the CEO as well you know I think, you know he, he needs some support with business development and you know. I think there's a lot of people but there are also the people who are under this. I tell you what is a stressor, or an, causes anxiety is the apparent

inequity in terms of, workload. So there are people around this office who do not seem to be that busy but then there's others like us that are flat out working weekends just to get the job done and that causes me anxiety because it feels unfair.

DA OK so this links to this question, says, you've said work related and organisation related factors are causing anxiety, are you is

HD2 Yeah, yeah I mean I don't, I'm fortunate enough at the moment to actually but I don't have any personal and, well there are some, we all have them to a certain extent but there's nothing big going on in my personal life, so, my work is the biggest cause of anxiety at the moment.

DA Do how is it affecting your work?

HD2 Well I've made mistakes I've definitely made mistakes, I hold my, and I hold my hand up to on one of these, I don't try to hide them there's no point because you'll just get found out. So.

DA Any examples of the mistakes that you could have?

HD2 Yeah so I was asked to check some data redundancy data actually for a member of staff and I got it wrong. So we communicated incorrect amounts to them. No we corrected it but it's just it's, it's a matter of integrity isn't it really, you know I'm like, oh, if only I, because I rushed it, if I'd have gone back and double checked it I would have realised what had happened. So it's those kind of thing and of course often they're quite visual. So it might be that I was providing some data to the CEO or and I'm like "oh, of all the people to get it wrong in front of" but it's because you're rushing and you're trying to be all things to all men.

DA So you mention other, even potentially the CEO that may have been affected by this. Would you say others have been affected their work has been affected as well?

HD2 What, by what I've done or by their own anxieties?

DA What's yeah, the anxiety that's going on within the organisation?

HD2 Yes, oh definitely.

DA Any examples you could give.

HD2 Well I think there's emotional outbursts which affect working relationships isn't there and I've seen plenty of those and it's inevitable when you're under a lot of pressure that these things do happen but of course it can be quite damaging to internal relations. I myself had a little moment when I had a bit of a go and not particularly proud of it but this is what happens when those kind of things occur. So I think that's the problem. There's also a, I think when people are annoyed with one another or where there's a lot of pressure, people can make, I suppose imbalanced judgements can't they. They can choose to go down a certain path, it's unhelpful, or say something or send an email that's just got a tone to it that just causes people stress.

DA So the email tones itself it's?

HD2 Yeah emails are a nightmare aren't they, I mean we know we know what the pitfalls are of sending a shirty email or an email that's worded in such a way that gets somebody's back up and I think that I think and this takes me right back to my first point which is about communication. If you can communicate verbally with somebody it's far, far better than to do it through an email. But because of the nature of our business and the fact that our people travel so much, often, and often a lot of our communication is done by email when people are tired and they're overseas and they're, they've been travelling for hours and they're just snippy little emails without really much forethought and planning.

DA So it takes me to this point then, in terms of, you yourself have been anxious about the situation that you've just discussed and other members of staff as well. Do you think that's affected your judgement and decision making? Is it sometimes here?

HD2 Yeah I think, I think, I think what happens when you're anxious or stressed, and they are two different things but, is that you, it clouds your judgement sometimes you sort of can't see the wood for the trees because you're worrying about something that may or may not happen. So, I'm just trying to think if I've got a good example of that.

Yeah so, it's more to do with how you react to situations I think. So, something's happened, something you're not happy with, and, you could choose to send an email or you could go and knock on that person's door and say, "can I have a chat?" but because you're cross about something or worried about something, you might send an email that may actually not help the situation. So it's poor judgement in that sense, you could just go and try and resolve it.

DA Yeah OK. Again other members of staff, could you give an example of how maybe their judgement or decisions have been affected by them being anxious about a situation, from the top to the bottom.

HD2 Yeah, so let's think this through so. Yeah. So, if we were using say the CEO for an example, he's got a member of staff on his team who has some issues with how he behaves in terms of his, style, management style and this has been addressed, spoken, we've, well the CEO and I have discussed it and we've done some 360 feedback for that individual. But I, I think the CEO shies away from handling those conversations because he doesn't want conflict with that member of staff who is very good in every other way and we don't want to lose from the business but we do need to address those issues, because it's causing problems and anxiety for other people. And because the CEO doesn't, is nervous of having those discussions nothing happens, but actually it causes more problems because then it's not being rectified.

So that, that's an example. In other areas of the business I think, as, so I can use the same person as an example, the person that we're trying to have, well I'm trying to support. There are people in the business that don't want to approach him because of fear of conflict or backlash. So people are going ahead and making decisions without really collaborating in the right way, and therefore you're not getting all the stakeholders on board and the, I'm not saying the correct decisions aren't being made but they're not being made in the correct way.

DA So are those people underneath this person as well as above this person having a challenge in terms of communicating with this person.

HD2 Yeah, yeah I think so.

DA And is this person a head or just a?

HD2 A fairly senior role yeah not a, not a head of no. But still you know, yeah, senior person.

DA OK great, takes me to the last question actually. How does the organisation respond to anxiety in the work place is the support not provided? Yeah.

HD2 OK so, so we've looked at this as a group of people and we've talked about how we might, support our employees with distress or anxiety whatever and, I think if I'm honest they've paid a bit of lip service to it, they haven't really embraced this as an issue and so what we've done in our latest annual survey, employee annual surveys, we've actually included some questions around stress and how people are feeling because, there's I think there's a view from the top that there isn't an issue with stress and anxiety in the business which is not shared by everybody. So the only way I can highlight it is to prove it. So, the idea is we, the annual survey isn't finalised it's not, it's gone out but it's not, I haven't had all the results in yet.

So over the next few weeks we'll be looking at those results because it's my, in my opinion, I'm not saying there's a massive issue but we do need to do something to support our employees who are struggling with stress levels at the moment. And, unless I can prove that we've got the issue, then I don't think anything much will be done about it.

DA OK. So at the moment you're waiting to prove to then do something where the organisation can then find solutions to the problem.

HD2 And I think the problem is, there are people who don't consider themselves to be stressed but it's actually that they're not recognising it in themselves. I mean I, I can give a personal example of my father in law who, who I would describe as a doctor botherer he goes to the doctor's every five minutes because he thinks something's wrong with him, but actually I think what the issue is, he's got anxiety and he doesn't see it in himself because he everything is about, oh my gosh I'm going to die or whatever and I think that there are lots of people who are around who don't, who are unable to recognise symptoms of anxiety in themselves and therefore they don't think there's a problem with anxiety in the business and unfortunately one of those is at a senior level in the business so therefore it's not being given, it's not being given the credence that it needs.

DA So physical symptoms them, what symptoms would you describe as evidence of these people.

HD2 Well what I, what I've experienced I mean I can honestly say, you know the tightness in the chest, kind of thing which is "oh my god I'm having a heart attack" when you're incredibly stressed that can come it's not very often. A tightening of muscles so back ache, back pain that kind of thing because you're holding yourself in a different way. Sleepless nights you know waking up in the early hours of the morning worrying about work and that's got to be a sign of anxiety hasn't it.

DA Have you gone through that?

HD2 Yep, yep.

DA OK.

HD2 And you know, getting home and, you know not being able to get go of what's going on at work it's quite hard, it doesn't happen all the time but there are pinch points you know and I you know I know that I know that that has been experienced by other people in the business because they, they've referred to it and you can see at times and you know some days are fine, and everybody goes on normally but then you just get the odd day where it's all going on and, just the general behaviours change, you can feel it, it's a strange.

DA Say talk, behaviour change, can you give me an example of behaviours that you'd see.

HD2 So it's more about shortness people not responding or not responding in a friendly manner, just very tense atmosphere. I think it is really difficult in a small business because such a lot rides on, so few people that the pressure's so much worse. There's no one you can hand off to, to delegate to, you've just got to get on and do it.

DA Great. So anything else you'd like to share that you think it's really useful you know in terms of this topic anxiety in the business context.

HD2 In the business context, is there anything else I want to. Yes I think so, I think, I think probably it's the same with any kind of mental health problem or issue, it's just not talked about and I think it's also viewed as a sign of weakness and I think that's really not helpful because there are a lot of people that suffer with anxiety that don't talk about it because of that very reason and therefore they're not able to get the help they need or support, I don't mean help it's not about dishing out a load of tablets. It's about saying, you know what can we do to make your life easier, or support you, because I think their work flow would be so much better, there would be fewer mistakes, there would be less not behavioural but relationship issues and all of those

kind of things if people were able to just discuss openly their concerns around anxiety and, and so on.

DA Great. And that actually takes me to one more point, so you did mention that because sometimes you feel pressure, you know, 85% achievement is really what, are people is there an example where your anxiety's actually caused you to do better or to?

HD2 No.

DA No.

HD2 I'll tell you what, it has the opposite effect in my. There's an element of I think we would all agree there has to be an element of stress to produce something. You know we, some people thrive on stress, I certainly know that I get more done when I'm under a bit of pressure because it's easy just to take your foot off the pedal isn't it when you're not under pressure. So in terms of getting the job done then I can sort of see that, but when you actually push it further to literally suffering with anxiety I think that has the opposite effect. It's gone too far by then and then what's actually happening is you're just not as productive which means you're then having to work even longer hours which creates more anxiety and it's kind of a vicious circle then in my case anyway.

DA OK good, that's it.

HD2 Was that useful?

DA Perfect yeah very useful thank you so much for your time.

HD2 That's alright.

DA Really very useful information. What I'm going to be doing is collating all the information from the members of staff of [Name of organization] and then do an analysis and it will go into my PhD report and also potentially journal articles as well so thank you so much for time and for the opportunity.

HD2 That's alright, I'm happy clarify anything.

DA And I'll switch off and then.

HD2 But yeah if you want any more clarity on anything that's, I'm happy to answer more questions so.

DA Good thank you.

End of transcription [Name of organization]

SME Staff Interview Transcript- Manager

Interview Transcript

Interviewer: DA

Participant: MA1

DA I'm conducting this research as part of PhD programme and also part of research on SMEs and anxiety and will be talking to [name of participant] about his experiences of anxiety within his organisation. [name of participant] introduce yourself, please.

MA1 Yeah, my name's [name of participant]. I work as a financial planning and reporting analyst at [name of organization], which is based in Cheltenham in the UK.

DA Can you confirm that you have given your consent for me to conduct this interview.

MA1 Yeah, I'm happy for that to happen.

DA and are you happy with the purposes I'm using this research.

MA1 Yes, absolutely.

DA What is your position in the organisation?

MA1 So I work as a financial planning and reporting analyst, which basically means that I work within the finance team. I report directly to the finance director and I am responsible for a lot of the management reporting that happens within the company, as well as kind of providing ad hoc reporting, as required, to senior members of the organisation and the board.

DA How many members of staff do you have within your team?

MA1 So directly in the finance team there are currently 4 of us with a further finance manager in each of the countries where operate and so we actually now all report directly to the finance director in the UK for the UK team.

DA How many other finance managers in the other countries?

MA1 So in the other countries we've got one in Ghana, who looks after the Ghana and Malawi business and we've got one in Kenya, one in Tanzania, we've got I think 3 in the Philippines and there's 1 in Bangladesh, 1 in India and then we also have an outsourced finance function in our operations in Pakistan.

DA Can you confirm you gender as male?

MA1 Yeah, I am male, absolutely.

DA Could you describe what the term anxiety means to you.

MA1 to me, I think it's a state of your mind where you create a number of scenarios in your head, a number of what if scenarios and maybe rightly or wrongly, some of those then start to dominate your present kind of form of thinking.

DA If that dominates your thinking, how are your emotions in that situation, would you say?

MA1 I think potentially you become less connected in some ways to your current situation and so you're possibly then less able to operate effectively in the what do I have here and now because your kind of pretty concerned with what is happening or what could happen in the future.

DA Would you say that maybe you or anyone in the organisation has suffered from anxiety?

DA So I think me personally, I have a bit of a reputation of being quite cool and quite not, you know, not easily fazed by things and so I think naturally my character is one that doesn't over-think things. I'm actually married to somebody that is a perfectionist and so is very much so a, I think, a worrier and an excellent operator, which actually makes it an interesting kind of combination and probably has also made me realise how I'm quite, almost not happy go lucky but almost much more of a living in the moment kind of person.

DA Would you describe anxiety as a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome?

MA1 Yeah, I think so, yeah. I think the only thing I'd add to that is I think it also can be from past events as well, so looking back on to, you know, the email that you sent or a conversation that you had and that kind of worry of did I say the right thing or I wonder how somebody interpreted what I said, so.

DA Have you had any experiences of that in the past?

MA1 Me personally, in terms of me over-thinking.

DA Especially in the work context.

MA1 Yes, in the work context. Yeah, I have. I think it, it often probably has more to do with when you have those conversations with maybe more senior members of staff and you think, actually did I say the right thing. I guess, to give an example from this morning. So our CEO came and asked me some questions about something that I'd worked on 15 months ago, so I then pulled up the data and the models that I'd worked on to do that and obviously I then had to quickly refresh in my mind what was actually going on in this model, to then give him the correct information and you always have that slight concern with somebody like a CEO, of am I giving the correct information quick enough, you know.

Am I giving it in a clear, concise way when some of these models can be, you know, very complicated and so yeah, you have that slight thing of I hope I presented the information in such a way that he then went away and understood what he needed and actually he got the answers to the questions that he was asking, as well.

DA So why would you say that that would have made you feel a bit anxious?

MA1 I think, for me, I think I'm the type of person that always wants to improve, so if I can learn something from that experience this morning and make it better for next time, so that might be, I don't know, so maybe to give an example in this case because it was a very specific moral, but you know, if it's general finances for example, actually making sure that I've got enough of a knowledge of the company, so if somebody asks me a question, actually I've got that in my head rather than always having to go to a bit of paper and I think the reason that's important for somebody

in my role, is that actually a lot of what I do is becoming a trusted adviser. So, if somebody's asking me for the numbers they want to be happy that I understand what's going on because actually anyone can look up the numbers, as it were. So, it's kind of, I guess, inspiring that confidence in terms of I know what's behind them and I know what they are as well.

DA Would any of these situations make you anxious or a bit worried? Client customer problems, business partnership problems.

MA1 Yeah, I think so. In my current role I'm less involved with customers directly. In previous roles I've had direct interaction with customers and obviously it's a very, it can be very concerning if your customer's not happy with what you're producing and part of your role then is to work to make sure that the customer is kind of on board and happy, so yeah, it doesn't impact me a lot now but yeah, I certainly have had experience of that in the past.

DA How about with financial sort of circumstances within the organisation. Does that create any problems and if so, why?

MA1 I think one of the advantages of being in my role is that you see everything. So, you know exactly how much money there is at any one time, you know exactly what the costs are. I think that can also be a downside as well, because you again, you see everything, and you have to make it kind of clear to yourself that you can't always make your subjective opinions, you have to stay very objective about that. So, I think in some ways that being in my role probably reduces that anxiety because I see so much. I think also I'm very lucky to be in a position where I've a very good working relationship with my like manager and we can talk these things through.

So obviously 2 people can see 2 different, or the same set of numbers and actually interpret those very differently and by having a boss who's very experienced to go to and say, this is what I see, is that the same, that can actually be very reassuring in some cases.

DA Have you ever worried about things that could happen to the organisation if things didn't go well financially?

MA1 Yeah, absolutely. I think with the individual kind of circumstances of [name of organization], where it's not yet a profitable company, there's always the risk that the next round of investment that we go for, the shareholders simply say no, this has come to the end of its life. I think, what I said earlier, the fact that I'd probably get a heads-up view of that much before other members of staff, in some ways, is a good thing. I think also it makes me make sure that I'm on top of my game in terms of my own personal career path as well. Just to make sure that if anything was to happen, actually I'm in a position where I can be proactive and go out and look for new opportunities and in theory that should then sort of set me up better, rather than I get to be in a position where you get made redundant and you have a month's notice and then you've only got maybe a month to find a new job.

Which, you know, I think if that were the case, that would obviously be a hugely worrying time. I think the advantage I have at the moment is that I can see it coming 6 months out and so any of those calls is, you know, I get a much longer lead time. So, I think in that sense it's probably less of a worry.

DA Do you in any way at all still at the back of your mind, worry about the fact that you may have to look for another role in 6 months' time or beyond?

MA1 I think for where I am, my long-term future probably isn't going to be at [name of organization]. I mean, that said, I've been here for 7 years, so I was here effectively as a graduate and they have grown the company since then. I think, when you may be slightly more selfish, you look at your career progression and the way you need to go, I think for me personally, within the next few years I'm going to need to be in a bigger organisation, just to get that experience. So, I think in some ways it's less of a worry in that I think I will probably leave before I would get pushed out of the company.

But that said, I mean as I said, I've been here for 7 years, so it's a company that I care deeply about. I've been very involved with it, in terms of its growth and with all of those things you then care for the people that you work with and unfortunately you wouldn't want to wish it on anyone that you should suddenly go, that's it, we're going to close shop. So yeah, you know, if it was called today, you've got 6 months, yeah absolutely, you know, that would be a worry, it would mean I'd have to up my game a bit and start looking a bit harder.

DA Is there anyone maybe within your team that you may have noticed that may have been a bit anxious about their position in relation to the finances, for instance?

MA1 I think everyone is always aware in a company that's not making a profit or not actually always breaking even, that there is a need to move towards greater profitability and I think yes, in some cases, some team members may raise questions, why are we spending that when we need to do this. I think on the other hand, there's a case of understanding where you want to be, where you are and what the steps are in between and sometimes those steps, you know, to grow a business or actually to

put it this way, if you wanted to break even straight away, the answer's easy.

You shut the shop straight away and that's it. You don't spend any more money, you don't get any more revenue but that's fine, you're breaking even. Now obviously that's not an optimal position where we want to be, so everyone realises that to some extent you need to spend more money in order to drive the business development side of the business, which then in turn will lead to increased revenue and continuing that journey towards profitability and I think people generally do understand that. I guess those questions then get asked on the things that don't lead to that path or don't obviously lead to that path. You know, it's very easy to hire somebody that is a business development manager. If you're then hiring a highly paid support resource, that then obviously becomes a bit of a harder question of are they, you know, linking into this going towards where we want to be.

But I think again you have this thing where you maybe feel anxious or you might not feel that that's the correct decision but you also have to come to that point and say actually, well you know, it's not just one person's decision why that person has been brought in or why that cost has been incurred and therefore effectively you have to trust your senior management team and your board that the decisions that they are making are strategically correct and I think you almost have to get to that point that if you don't continue to agree with those decisions that senior management are making and the board are making, that actually you're going to have to re-evaluate kind of where you are and where you fit into that, so.

DA When there has been a board decision that perhaps may have caused a bit of worry, do you share that at all with anyone within the organisation?

MA1 So yes, I'll talk a lot with my line manager, he's the finance director and actually part of my role is to be quite opinionated at times and so yeah, you know, we have these conversations and I may well walk in and say, what are we doing, this is ridiculous and in some of those meetings, you know, a range of conversations we'll have and sometimes it'll be actually the board feels this is strategic and this is where we want to take it and kind of then, you know, maybe you're brought round to seeing it. Other times, it might be a, that's just what it is and they are the times when you just have to lump it and trust, like I said earlier but yeah, certainly I'm having that sounding board and I think as somebody who's relatively young in their profession as well, by having somebody that's very experienced that you can ask the question, you know, I think this is a big deal.

Do you think this is a big deal and if they come back and say, I don't think it's a big deal, this is why I don't think it's a big deal, that actually really then puts your mind at rest. Sometimes you have a thing where you say, I think this is a big deal and they come back and say, yeah, I think it's a big deal too. That in some ways can be, you know, can cause that anxiety because you think, oh actually maybe this is pretty bad. On the other hand, I think one of those things of identifying issues within a company, once everyone is on board that this is an issue, and everyone realises it is an issue, then they can then actually put resource into making sure that doesn't become a very big issue. So, it's in some ways as well actually recognising it as being a big issue, can in some ways take the anxiety away because you then know it's being dealt with.

DA Do you share your opinions with other members of your team?

MA1 We do, I mean we are in an open plan office, so we have to be a little bit careful in terms of what information is shared because we have a access to a lot of information that isn't public knowledge or isn't even to be

shared with others in the company, in the direct company. But yeah, I mean we certainly talk as a team.

DA And does anyone openly share with you as a team, their anxieties about issues, decisions that have been made about business issues?

MA1 I guess kind of anecdotally, possibly, you know, not, it wouldn't be in a formal setting but yeah, you know, maybe over lunch or you know, just in passing conversation that kind of comes up.

DA So if someone shared their anxiety, is there anything done, is there a response from you and then from the organisation?

MA1 There's, I mean to give you one example, when Sarah?, our accounts assistant came on board, she'd been in a role for a number of years, you know, I think 20 something years she'd been in this previous role and obviously for her to move jobs was a huge thing because she had to learn a whole new business and new processes and procedures and so I guess for her in some ways there was the anxiousness that came out of actually, am I doing the correct thing, am I doing the right job, am I getting this right? I think those are definitely the kind of things that were taken on board. I think what she then realised was actually yes, she was more than capable, and she was able to truly add value and improve processes and the way that things were done.

And I think in a way that kind of has been really kind of confidence building for her personally because she realises that, well actually, I can do this and actually I can actually make it better than it was before as well and I think sometimes that is just a bit of a long term gain, you know, it's not something that happens within a few weeks. It's over a period of months really that, you know, you can see those differences being made.

DA So it's like a learning process.

MA1 Yeah.

DA Would you say that feeling anxious about a situation has actually affected your decision or judgement?

MA1 I don't think so, no. I think, I mean like I said earlier, I've got enough of a sounding board to kind of size up the scale of how bad something is. I think also, in my role, I actually do tend to present very objective data and so actually the decision is often left up to either senior management or the board so having done that effectually presents things as they are and then says this is how is, you guys make the decision and so I think that is probably. I'm just trying to think of smaller examples.

You know something, like I don't know, if I had a project that I didn't want to do, and I was, not that I would procrastinate on it but, you know, that kind of thing, would the anxiousness? Possibly with some of the smaller things, yeah, you know, you kind of get that thing of. That said, I think I am the type of person that I just, you know, just get it out of the way, just said it.

DA Have you ever had that in a work context where maybe a project you had to do or something you had to do, you procrastinated about it and were a bit anxious about it?

MA1 Yeah absolutely, you know, I mean, you know, you've always got a certain amount of work on and you will always naturally want to pick the things that you enjoy doing before the things that you don't really want to get involved with at all, you know, and I'm not sure if that it's anxious, you

know, I don't think it's the negative that's pulling it across, I think it's just about actually there's a lot of other things I prefer to do, so I think that's the best way of saying it.

DA Is there anything that's happened recently within your team or within the organisation, that may have caused a bit of worry for the team or team members?

MA1 So obviously we've restructured the UK finance team in the last kind of 2 or 3 months. Did that cause me worry? Honestly, I don't think it did. I think I was in a position where I was able to find out relatively quickly how safe my personal role was. I think not that, you know, obviously we care about our team but there is an ultimate aim where this is business, this is work and so for me personally, I guess I was in a position where I was happy, that things were secure for me. I think it was, as we touched on already, because you see all the information, you know the context behind the restructure, whereas in other positions, you know, you maybe start a restructure and people then speculate on the reasons behind that restructure and so even when the company says, this is now finished, they're never fully satisfied that that is it.

You carry on and so I think having seen a bit more of the background behind it and then the reasons for us needing to restructure, you know, it became clear that that actually the set-up that we currently have is suitable for that.

DA Was anybody affected by the restructure?

MA1 So there was 1 redundancy, yeah, so it was 1 redundancy from the finance team.

DA Did that person in any way show any anxieties or worry during that process when the restructure was happening?

MA1 She actually did, yeah. I'm not sure it would be entirely appropriate to go into any more details of that but yeah, I think it's fair to say that they would have been, yeah.

DA Did they share it in any way before. Saying to the team, I'm a bit concerned about the restructure?

MA1 So with this, obviously I'm just careful because it was a recent thing. I don't know how much information Stephen has already provided.

DA Yes, he said there was a restructure and they supported the person.

MA1 Yeah, you know, I think actually for the person that was involved, she had a STF1tian faith and actually, you know, one of the things she said to me, was actually I'd rather just trust that God's got it sorted for me and I thought, you know, I thought that was quite an interesting position to be in where she had this kind of trust in something else that would make that OK for her. Was she upset by it? Yeah, I'm sure she was, you know, absolutely.

DA Was anybody else within the team upset to see their colleague?

MA1 I think on a personal level, yeah definitely, you know, because it's always hard for somebody that you've worked with and known well to.

DA Did it in any way affect the mood of staff at that time?

MA1 I think there was probably on some parts the worry of OK, what additional work will I need to take on in the short term. The office dynamics obviously for that period of notice got obviously slightly more awkward than they normally would be, which I think is very understandable. I don't think there were any kind of super-awkward moments equally though, in that time. I think it was a fairly.

DA How would you say the line manager or management supported the team in that process?

MA1 Oh actually the team. I think they made clear, you know, support both on an official basis and then a slightly more informal basis, what the process was, why it was occurring and as part of that process obviously there was a requirement for a fully qualified, more experienced member of staff to replace this individual, which I think in some ways there was a kind of expectation and a sense of excitement's probably egging it on a bit too far but actually that sense of, well actually as a function in the long term we will operate more effectively and will be able to do more than we currently have as a result of that restructure.

So I think in some ways although it's, as I said earlier, harder on a personal level, I think in some ways, on a professional level, there's an element of kind of expectation of actually, you know, where are we going to get to is going to be better and I think that's a common occurrence and as I said, you know, I've been with [name of organization] for 7 years and there's been massive changes in the business in that time and when you start off, you think that you need one type of staff or, you know, you identify the kind of roles that you think you need and then obviously you're a year into that, 2 years into that and you realise that actually maybe that was what we needed at the time but this is now what we need now and obviously on a personal level it's very hard if you have to make those decisions to restructure.

From a purely business point of view, you know, you go back to that phrase business is business and ultimately, you're not growing an effective and efficient business just by keeping people on that you used to be good at a role that, you know, you used to require. I mean I've personally been in the situation where I came on as a communications manager, I then moved to a project management role, looked after agricultural division and then ended up in finance and actually there is no agricultural division left in the company any more. So, had I been set with that role and actually had I been inflexible I guess in some way for my ability to retrain and take on new things, I would have found myself in a position of redundancy 2 or 3 years ago.

DA So would you say, has there been any major issues or situations in past that has impacted the whole organisation that you would say has made you or team members a bit worried?

MA1 Yeah, I don't think there's anything been kind of on a huge basis. You know, so there's always been the UK head office, as far as I know we've never made a decision, OK we're going to move the head office somewhere else. I mean we've had times where we've had to close down some operations in Africa say because the options that we went after didn't actually turn out exactly in the way that we thought it would. That then leads to, you know, the inevitable closing and the redundancies that go with that. I don't think there was a sense of worry because I think everyone was so aware that these places weren't working that it became the obvious decision to make.

So, you know, and again people are rightly saddened and concerned for the guys that have been made redundant. I think actually [name of organization]'s got a very good history of supporting those people, so making sure that, you know, they're doing everything they can, in terms of references, in terms of actually helping them sort out their CVs, in

terms of sometimes job-searching, just say hey, you know, I know this person here and they might have an opportunity with this company.

DA Stephen mentioned that you used this as an opportunity to help people to develop so they can move forward. Is that what you're saying?

MA1 Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I think Stephen's very unique in the fact that I can actually chat to him about possible opportunities and he will be able to look at those and say, yeah that looks good, these bits are good, these bits are bad, what do you, you know, and I mean that's a relationship that I don't ever expect to have again with a line manager, where you can show him a job you're potentially interested in. But he does make it very interesting for is him then being able to say, identify your skills gaps between what you've got now and what you need for that role or you know, picturing the role and identifying the gaps. Because in doing that actually you then realise where you need to improve. But it also helps the company as well, in the meantime.

You know, that's one for me, as I'm currently going through a few professional qualifications with CIMA and in some ways, you know, I think the company can say, well we're spending all this money, you know, what if he goes, that's what I've had for years and said something like, we pay all this money to train our staff, what if they leave and the reply to that is well, what if you don't train them and they stay and actually it's that thing if I did find how skills improvement can improve your current role in what you do, making you more efficient in what you do as an individual as well.

DA You've got this good relationship with your line manager and would you say that other members of staff have that same access, where they get supported and encouraged.

It's only if the guys report to him, yes generally. I think there's a massive variance in the company in terms of, I guess personalities as much as anything of line managers. You know, some people are naturally more approachable than others.

DA Do does your line manager then share with you as a team, individuals or as a team his concerns?

MA1 So, so yeah, so every week we will do a 1 to 1, which is a fairly kind of set proforma that effectually just says, you know, these are my key accomplishments and progress in the last week. The second section is then, this is what I've got ahead, this is what I'm going to be working on and then the third part of that is kind of anything else, so anything that needs escalating or anything maybe outside of work, so obviously my training up and coming, things like that and as part of that 1 to 1 then Steve will also kind of share, oh actually this is what I'm working on, fill you up and.

DA Would he share his concerns about things to do with the organisation?

MA1 Yeah, he will, yeah, I think in a kind of professional context as well but he's quite happy to say actually I'm working on this and this concerns me or I'm working on this and, you know, we're going to need to get behind this and make this happen. So yeah, you certainly get a sense of what's important or what's worrying the guys as well.

DA Do you get similar communication with the finance managers in the other countries?

MA1 So I interact with our finance managers on a very kind of transactional basis. So, I carry on down with the line manager mainly in that way. So probably the answer is no on that one but I don't think it should be either, just they also have their 1 to1 with their line managers, they also have an internal forum where they will discuss any kind of concerns or procedures, stuff like that, but it just so happens that the way my role interacts, I don't come in, like I should be on there but it doesn't really make sense for me to be in those meetings, so, but yeah, I'm sure they do.

DA and how about your subordinates, will they share with you?

Yeah, yeah, you know, I think I'm on a personal basis with all, you know, chat with friends and colleagues. It's always a tricky balance when often you may know more than you are able to share and so in some cases, you want to give reassurances to people without, you know, effectually saying anything that you shouldn't.

DA How do you do that? How do you find that experience of this tricky balance?

MA1 I think it's hard, but you have to be, you have to err on the side of caution a lot of the time. I think obviously with colleagues in the company you kind of share more than you would with somebody that was completely outside the company because they know the context of what's going on. You know, obviously it would be completely inappropriate to say to somebody actually well, your jobs at risk because I saw it on the forecast or your job's safe whereas these other guys are at risk. You know, you simply can't share anything of that nature and I mean sometimes actually it's better not to have those conversations. From a purely professional point of view it's just not appropriate to be having them.

Sorry, just add to that, I think there are other cases, you know, this is one example with a colleague who was concerned about the fact that we weren't making money and effectively they thought that, you know, the company was at the end of the month going to fold, actually just to say to them, actually you know, that there's plenty of months' worth of investment money, you know, in the company and the investors aren't looking just to get rid of this straight away. I actually gave them a level of assurance that actually this was maybe not as bad as they thought. You know, something that's been suggested is there a way where we can communicate the kind of financial performance of the company to staff without again giving away too much sensitive information but equally, you know, reassuring where that's due.

DA What was the outcome of that? What have you decided to do, how do you communicate it to staff?

MA1 Yeah, I think we're still looking at it. I think probably in a couple of months once the budget becomes fully signed off, we will do some kind of presentation with the budget and I mean sometimes, you know, the numbers, I remember this and what's really important is strategically where we're building as a company. That said, obviously we're looking at where the money's being spent. It's often quite a good reflection of where we want to be as well.

DA Would you say because of your position, maybe even other members of staff would perhaps seek your reassurance and say to you, look I'm a bit worried, what do you think?

MA1 Probably not at a professional level. I think there may be a few that on a personal level may.

DA Is there any personal issue that's affected you, impacted on your decision making at work?

MA1 I don't think so. I think I can be quite compartmentalised in some ways and I'm quite a logical person as well, so actually I try to make sure there's enough natural checks and balances before I kind of hit the final go button. Yeah, I think as well, I don't think, emotionally I don't think I'd end up doing the wrong thing. I might appear differently, I might appear quieter in the office or something like that but or not be as talkative, but I don't think that ultimately impacts on how I do my job.

DA Anything you'd like to add on, that might be useful information?

MA1 No, I don't think so.

END OF TRANSCRIPTION

Appendix G: Copy of Two Completed Questionnaires

Experiences of anxiety in SMEs-[name of organization] Questions

The aim of this PhD research is to find out the experiences of anxiety in Small to Medium -Sized Enterprises (SMEs) such as [name of organization]. All data collected will be kept confidential and used only for the purposes of this research by Dee Allen, University of Gloucestershire. If you have any questions about this research, please contact Dee at dallen3@glos.ac.uk.

Questions for participants- Please tick the relevant answers:

1. Position in the organisation:

Director

Head of Department

Manager

Team/Staff member ✓

2. Gender:

Male

Female ✓

3. Would you describe the term anxiety as a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome?

Yes ✓

No

4. If you answered No, how would you describe anxiety?

5. Please indicate which of the following issues makes you anxious?

Client/customer problems

Business partnership problems

Financial

Failure of projects

Making decisions about work related issues ✓

Senior managers

Other members of staff

Other issues

None of the above

6. Do people talk about feeling anxious in the organisation?

Never

Rarely ✓

Sometimes

Always

7. Have you been or are you currently anxious about a particular situation?

Yes ✓

No

8. Has or are any of the following factors caused or causing the anxiety?

Personal

Work related ✓

Organisation related

9. Do you think that feeling anxious has affected your work?

Yes

No

Sometimes ✓

10. Is a member of staff in your organisation currently anxious or has been anxious about a particular situation?

Yes ✓

No

Don't Know

11. Has or are any of the following factors the caused or causing staff anxiety?

Personal

Work related ✓

Organisation related

Don't Know

12. Do you think that feeling anxious has affected staff work?

Yes ✓

No

Don't Know

13. Do you think that feeling anxious has affected your judgement and decisions?

Never

Sometimes ✓

Always

14. Do you think that feeling anxious has affected staff judgement and decisions?

Never

Sometimes ✓

Always

15. How does the organisation respond to anxiety in the workplace?

Support not provided

Support sometimes provided ✓

Support always provided

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Experiences of anxiety in SMEs- Name of organization- Questions

The aim of this PhD research is to find out the experiences of anxiety in Small to Medium -Sized Enterprises (SMEs) such as [name of organisation. All data collected will be kept confidential and used only for the purposes of this research by Dee Allen, University of Gloucestershire. If you have any questions about this research, please contact Dee at dallen3@glos.ac.uk.

Questions for participants- Please tick the relevant answers:

1. Position in the organisation:

Director

Head of Department

Manager

Team/Staff member ✓

2. Gender:

Male ✓

Female

3. Would you describe the term anxiety as a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome?

Yes ✓

No

4. If you answered No, how would you describe anxiety?

5. Please indicate which of the following issues makes you anxious?

Client/customer problems✓

Business partnership problems

Financial

Failure of projects

Making decisions about work related issues

Senior managers ✓

Other members of staff✓

Other issues

None of the above

6. Do people talk about feeling anxious in the organisation?

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Rarely ✓

Sometimes

Always

7. Have you been or are you currently anxious about a particular situation?

Yes

No ✓

8. Has or are any of the following factors caused or causing the anxiety?

Personal

Work related ✓

Organisation related

9. Do you think that feeling anxious has affected your work?

Yes

No ✓

Sometimes

10. Is a member of staff in your organisation currently anxious or has been anxious about a particular situation?

Yes ✓

No

Don't Know

11. Has or are any of the following factors the caused or causing staff anxiety?

Personal

Work related ✓

Organisation related

Don't Know

12. Do you think that feeling anxious has affected staff work?

Yes

No✓

Don't Know

13. Do you think that feeling anxious has affected your judgement and decisions?

Never✓

Sometimes

Always

14. Do you think that feeling anxious has affected staff judgement and decisions?

Never

Sometimes ✓

Always

15. How does the organisation respond to anxiety in the workplace?

Support not provided✓

Support sometimes provided

Support always provided

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Appendix H: Copy of SME Staff Focus Group Transcript

INTERVIEW WITH: FOCUS GROUP: STF1 , STF2, STF3, STF4, STF5

INTERVIEWER: DEE ALLEN (DA)

DA Thank you all for coming to this focus group, my name is Dee Allen and I'm from the University of Gloucestershire and I'm here to conduct research on SME's anxiety within SMEs and I'm here at [name of organization] and I've got with me five employees from [name of organization] to talk to me. I'm going to get them to introduce themselves shortly but. So thank you all for agreeing to sign the consent form for this interview and focus group and like I said in the consent form, this focus group is for my research in SMEs and also for my PhD thesis and it's just going to be an informal, you know, chat for us to talk about this topic of anxiety within SMEs and for you to share your opinions about your views on it, specifically in relation to your role and what you do and also in relation to your department and the organisation. So, if you don't mind if I can get you to introduce your name and your roles that will be really great.

STF1 My name is [], I 'm a software engineer

DA OK, thank you STF1.

STF2 My name is STF2 (NOISE) I'm a business analyst.

DA Thank you STF2.

STF3 I'm software engineer.

DA Thank you ...

STF4 I'm STF4, I'm a test analyst.

DA Thank you STF3.

STF5 I'm [Name]I'm a software engineer also.

DA OK thank you, thank you all for coming to this focus group. It's going to last for about 30 minutes. So, we won't take long and what I'm really looking for is to for you to tell me how you've experienced anxiety in this SME context. And so, before I start I'd like to get your definitions, what you think anxiety really means. So, if I can start with STF1, and we just go around each time.

STF1 Worry about events.

DA OK, anxiety's worry.

STF2 Yeah, I have to agree with him, with that statement, it's to me it represents worry if you worry about something, you're anxious about something happening or not happening.

DA Good.

STF3 Yeah, I mean I'm not sure if it is the same as stress, anxiety I guess it is, I'd say it was. Yeah.

DA OK so why do you feel anxiety is the same as stress?

STF3 Cos, I guess they're driven from the same things, I suppose, so I guess it's the same, I'd assume it's the same name for, a different name for some.

STF4 I would put, I would put stress a little bit higher than anxiety, anxiety is a bit of concern about something, whereas stress is even.

STF2 Bit more worry.

STF4 Is, is more pressure to me, that's my view on it.

DA OK so stress is a bit more pressure is what you're saying.

STF4 Yeah.

DA So what's anxiety?

STF4 I would say concern about something that perhaps raises your heart rate or, makes you feel uneasy about something.

DA OK so it raises your heart rate, so there's a physical (STF3 – yeah) symptom to it as well. OK, interesting and finally.

STF5 Yeah, I mean you've all said, really happy with all your definitions. Nothing to.

DA OK brilliant. So, I'm going to put it out to the room. What's causing you anxiety at the moment in your roles and feel free to just share. What's causing anxiety at the moment in your roles.

STF3 Probably there's a sort of continuous drive from those above to improve things and that's sort of fairly unrelenting. So yeah that probably, contributes I'd say.

DA OK.

STF2 Tight deadlines.

STF1 Yeah, I was going to say deadlines.

STF2 in all the projects so.

STF5 Yeah.

STF2 Projects disappearing.

STF1 Workload, yeah.

STF1 We'll pilot them, and then projects disappearing, projects in planning.

DA Project disappearing what does that mean?

STF1 You'll work on a project and you'll hear nothing of it and it'll get parked and that's it.

STF2 and then it comes back with a vengeance and you.

STF3 Two years later.

STF1 Yeah,

STF2 At least yeah.

STF1 So oh we're going to do this again, oh that's just disappeared.

STF2 That.

STF4, I think it, I think it, I think these things. It's worse in a small in an SME. I've worked for large companies as well and they don't, it, there is more to share the workload in a large company, so whereas here it's all concentrated on very few people.

STF3 Yeah, it's spread out in a big company amongst a load of people, so it's easier to hide it.

STF4 Yeah so if you feel you're take, have to take time off or you don't feel you don't feel guilty for doing it, you know and, yeah.

DA Yeah, anymore?

STF5 You say deadlines as well.

STF1 You take the company to heart when it's a small company, nearer to heart anyway cos it's, as Ian said it's not a big corporate that can swallow problems.

STF2 No. Yeah and you know that if you, if you're not there, there is nobody else to support the rest of the team so it's only going to pile up and if you've got so much work already that you can't see how on earth you're going to get through it by the deadline you've been given, then, yeah that probably starts the worry which yeah is a bit. It kicks up the anxiety and then potentially this can lead to yeah, you get all this stressed out, cos you don't want to let anybody down because it's a small place and you know you have to kind of, make sure that you, in a way that we all pull our weight. There aren't the people to be able to take over if, if you just, you know haven't got enough physical hours in the way to finish off stuff.

DA So at the moment do any of you feel over worked at present?

Not really.

STF4 I wouldn't say right at this moment, but it happens.

Yeah.

STF5 Yeah, sometimes happens.

DA Can you explain when it's happened and how you felt?

STF2, I think it's, I've only felt I've felt it off the back of as STF1 said, project being parked and then suddenly all waking at the same time and you've got so many plates spinning out there that and you don't want to drop any. So, you end up just doing more hours to make sure that it's done, but whether that's the right thing to do.

STF1 the nature of the work we do, means the clients want the work done yesterday and they don't give us any warning. Certainly, when it comes down to us we don't get to the warning and then it's needed for like, very tight turnaround times. So, you'll have a period where, work's relatively stable and someone turns around and goes 'oh we've got to do this' and then it happens at once.

DA OK so.

STF4 as for how we feel, I personally I mean I've been, couple of stressful situations since I've been here and, it affected me physically, effects like headache, tiredness and as I said before, a sort of general feeling of your heart sort of increasing in rate.

DA Has anyone else had any physical symptoms as a result of maybe, you know just being overworked and feeling anxious about the work? Any explanation of that at all?

STF3 Sort of sleepless nights that sort of thing. Yeah not, not massive amounts, very occasionally maybe.

DA What sleepless nights?

STF3 Yeah.

STF2 Yeah, I think that's sometimes you're just so focused.

STF5 or when you need that release in the evening?

STF4 Well that's the thing I don't get stressed out cos I just work until it's done so.

STF2 Yeah as we said, we work yeah sometimes you're so focused on it I have woken up at 3 in the morning thinking, 'oh I know how to solve that.'

STF4, I think those, I think those (STF2 – It's crazy) thoughts that we have and the feeling that we've got to get it done I think that is physical.

STF2 It is, sometimes you do feel it as you say in your chest. I think, oh I really yeah, need to get it done I don't want to let anybody down. But.

DA Fantastic, so as you're thinking, now I've got to do this, this has got to be done, oh I've got to stay till it's been.

STF4 and it's, it, you may not release but it's affecting your body.

DA OK, that's fantastic. OK, so one of the things you guys said was about the higher ups in terms of, if the, an instruction has come from the higher ups and you've got to get it done, it's got to be done, are you able to communicate to the higher ups? How you feel, that happens?

STF4 Only through line management but they're under pressure as well. So, so it's a hierarchy so it's not so easy perhaps to go directly.

STF1 It filters down.

STF4 to the top.

STF1 Everything filters down from the top.

DA OK so it's from the top to the bottom.

STF1 Yeah.

DA So when you say top what do you mean, top?

STF1 from the very top!

DA Very top?

STF4 [name of CEO] [name of COO]

STF2 CEO, COO.

DA Yeah.

STF2 It, but you know the.

STF4 [name of CEO]

STF2 They are, I believe personally this is just my opinion that I believe they know and they relate, and they understand, for the business to survive we have to react, we have to be first to market and if we're not then that's our bread gone.

STF4 That's true.

STF2 in a way we.

STF4 It's just the nature of the game really isn't it.

STF2 It's not just their company it's our company we're all. If we don't do it, even if it's stressing us out a bit or whatever, then, we might not be here tomorrow. So, then we'll be stressed out, cos we'll be job hunting. So, I think they do understand but yeah, they are as much under pressure cos we'll all be out there. We're either all in and you know they're travelling day in day out they're feeling I'm sure they're feeling the pressure in

different ways but, you know we can only work from our little pigeon hole and yes, everything pretty much filters down but I personally believe that they understand, and they feel it back up. They feel when we're under pressure too.

DA Who agrees with that sentiment, that they also feel.

STF4 Yeah.

STF1 Well yeah, they're very hands on so.

DA Who disagrees that maybe they don't feel, they could feel more?

STF2 Yeah, I mean that was just part of some.

STF4 I've worked here, never, I think that's shared.

STF4, I think in a smaller company you feel they're more aligned with you. In a big company you might not feel that way.

DA So you were saying, can you share your concerns directly, because it's a small organisation it's an SME can you do direct to the CEO and the COO and ExCo and say, 'this is how I'm feeling.' Can you do so?

STF1 Yeah, yeah in the pub certainly, in the pub certainly.

DA What, in the pub?

STF1 Yeah, down the pub yeah, it's an open forum that and they're quite happy.

STF5 but you feel that.

STF4 I don't whether I feel that way.

Edwin Yeah, because you say that feeling with all the guys in this environment, you don't need to say it cos you know that the other guy feels.

STF1 Yeah, you don't, yeah nothing needs to be said.

Ian, I feel as if I said something they'd say, 'well everybody's in the same boat, so just get on with it.'

STF5 Yeah, we are in the same boat.

STF2, I think you know we probably tend to get to line management and we do have regular one to ones and, you don't even have to wait for a one to one if you feel something is at risk or not quite right or whatever, it doesn't feel right. Then just then to go, at least to, in our case, our line is [name of line manager] and [name of head of department] and definitely [name of line manger], I mean [name of head of department] is, it has to be busier but, [name] makes sure that then it gets filtered up that this is how the team is feeling, they're under pressure and let them know, how our ??

DA So there's a chance for you to communicate to your line managers and share opening how you're feeling?

STF3 Yeah, I mean yeah.

STF4 Not exclusive.

STF3 One to one every two weeks don't we, so, and they're fairly, placed to voice any concerns.

DA So let me ask, if you're feeling anxious or stressed, specially about your tight deadlines and the workload and you feel you need support, how do you get that support?

STF3 Supporting.

STF1 Line manager again.

DA Yeah.

STF5 Yeah, support.

STF4 It depends what support you mean I suppose.

DA So what support to you, how would you feel supported? And how have you been supported?

Elling If you feel pressure or some, the timeline is.

STF3 Support to you personal or the support to the work?

STF1 the job?

STF5 in the work?

DA in the work.

STF3 So two types of support really.

DA in the work. Let's deal with the work.

STF5 Yeah..... Say, 'come can you give me a hand please.'

STF1 Yeah but that's.

STF2 If the base resource.

STF3 the thing is though, if you're busy, I'm busy.

STF1 Capacity yeah.

STF3 If one person's busy everyone's busy so that's the problem.

DA So you're saying that is, is it easy to get support? Or is it?

STF3 Get adequate help but as and when you need.

STF2 Yeah, it's limited resource so but at the end, you know at the end of the day it, it then, if you have too much and it cannot be done then, if it cannot be shared about either then it goes back up like management or prioritisation in all. I've got five things, there's just no way they're all going to get done by Tuesday, well which ones do I do first? I mean that's the worst-case scenario when that happened, because.

DA So you can go back to line management and ask.

STF2 You have to say.

DA for priority.

STF2 You know this is the risk, I can't do them all so which ones do I do first and then if the last one drops out for next spring, till next week then, so be it, there's only so many hours in the day and we all have families. So yeah.

DA So you've talked about the work now. How about the personal then, if you're feeling anxious, you're emotional about it, do you get personal support, personally? Is it there?

STF3, I suspect it might be if you asked, I don't know, I've never.

STF2 I've not been in that situation but.

DA Yeah, have you seen anyone go through any experience in your department or in the organisation you know where they've had to go through a really tough time and?

STF4 What's his name, the guy who ended up leaving. That guy who joined with us, can't remember his name, [name], he had some, he had a lot of issues didn't he and they were quite supportive there.

STF1 Yeah, he's got health issues as well sort of thing yeah.

DA OK so you're saying there's some support there, although you've never used it may be there it may be available.

STF4, I think we believe that there's support there, but it's never come to that.

STF2 Yeah, or else I mean, I, that chap before my time I don't know.

DA OK that's interesting so I'm going to ask you, another thing that people are saying with anxiety is that when you're anxious about something it could help you or it could hinder you, or it could you know change whatever. So, from your perspective, does anxiety help you if you're anxious about the situation, does it help you? Or does it hinder you? Or both?

STF4 Personally I feel it hinders me.

STF1 Yeah

STF2 Yeah.

STF1 Yeah for the sort of things we do, you're better off with a clear head rather than ?? about.

STF3 Doesn't necessarily hinder but it's.

STF4 It can often make things worse, if I'm under pressure.

DA Has being anxious in any way affected your decision making?

STF4 Well yes, like I said, yeah, really.

DA Any examples of whilst you were working you were anxious about something about work and you've had to make a decision about it?

STF5 In, our levels we don't have any hard decisions to make.

STF1, I suppose the only time you, that kind of that might affect is like, you hear is, X, Y, Z getting made redundant or all of a sudden you see like monster jobs come up.

DA So that's interesting, redundancy. There was a recent restructure at [name of organization] in all the changes, how did you feel about that at the time?

STF1 Well it didn't impact us did it.

STF2, I didn't, yeah, we weren't really affected.

STF1 Well you say that we're getting replaced by you know [name of manager]

STF5 Ah yeah, they change.

STF1 [NAME] is not employing UK based engineers.

STF2 New people here.

DA So [NAME] not employing more people?

STF1 He is in India, cos they're cheaper.

DA They're cheap, OK. So how does that make you feel?

STF1 Anxious.

STF2 Tired, placed.

DA So you're feeling that maybe recruiting in juniors in India you know could be something to be concerned about?

STF1 Ah yeah, I don't as much because I've been through it a few times and it hasn't it's never really impacted you as much as you think it might, but that's not to say it won't just in my history it hasn't.

STF4 It, it's not as if the Indian people have replaced people here, they've just been an addition to.

STF2 New additions.

STF3 Ah, I don't know, trying to think how many engineers we've got here now. Lot less than what we used to have.

STF2 Yeah cos they have left and what they've done is they haven't replaced anybody here, but they haven't made anybody redundant, they're just replacing.

STF1 Yeah that's the thing it's a natural, it's not specific redundancies it's natural attrition.

DA So as attrition where it's not replaced people or person that have left, how has that impacted you? How do you feel about that?

STF3, I mean it's made it tougher cos it's quite hard always working with an offshore team, especially when we've got four effectively brand-new people.

STF3 You know we're trying to teach them and help them and assist them, but they are.

STF4 Plus the time difference so we're.

STF3 4 and a half hours ahead.

STF4 We're in a narrow window where we're all together.

STF3 So it takes a lot of your time and that obviously impacts on everything else which as you know I guess drive your anxiety levels up because you're not concentrating on the stuff you need to be.

STF4 Yes, that's true, everything has a knock-on effect doesn't it.

STF1 Yeah, dealing with the fall out new people in India at the moment not always, they're not fully understanding what they need to do at the moment. They'll get there, they will get there.

DA So what would you say right now would be the biggest cause of anxiety for the whole SME, the whole organisation, what could be the biggest concern at the moment?

STF3 Yeah probably the sort of future of the company if you like cos, if we haven't got a solid income we're trying to get one, they're supported by AXA sort of third party that own us.

STF4 It's a little bit like.

STF3 We couldn't stand on our own.

STF4 It's a little bit like being self-employed I mean, a little bit on a larger scale.

DA So is that feeling that it's like a self-employed person you're always worrying about the next client, next business, is that what you're saying?

STF3 I expect people at the top are more than we are.

STF4 I think as a business we do but personally I don't.

STF5 No.

STF4 but as a business it's a, it's a.

STF2 Yeah so that would be their stress ?? do whatever they find a ?? try and make sure that it's converted into you know profit, a partner.

DA but any of you.

STF2 But, we've replaced one of our guys here, [name] placement, he's been.

STF1 Yeah, he's legitimately new yeah it does happen yeah.

STF2 So you know they, we do still replace here where needed.

STF1 There's two contractors.

STF4 Well have, they're have now, now haven't they.

STF2 Yeah.

STF3 He's permanent, is he permanent? Yeah.

STF2 He's permanent.

STF3 So we've got two new permanent people this year.

STF2 Yeah because one of the business

STF1 and four new offshore guys so, on the whole that's six new people in 2 months, in that, 3 months maybe.

STF2 Cos [name] our previous business analyst, I think you've met left. So, we've just replaced him with another business analyst and two of the contractors their contracts finished and now we have a perm, Dave is permanent isn't he.

STF5 Yeah, he's permanent.

STF2 We got a permanent.

DA Placement?

STF2 Person here but at the same time as STF1 said, there's been two new hires, or three new hires over in India. So, I think that's also strategic to be fair, because of the time differences with some of the other countries that means that once they get ramp up and get up to speed there'll be a lot more continuous support in a way.

DA So does anybody in here ever worry about the business, in other words, looking at things, like a self a self-employed. So, do you ever , at home think about the business, not about your role but about the business on a whole? And actually, have that worry about the business?

STF3 No not too much because you can't.

STF4 Yeah.

STF3, we do if it will impact or affect us.

STF1, I do, I do yeah.

STF4 we do every say month because we have a, everyone gets together and Rich addresses everybody. Tells us where the business is going and then you think about it, on that particular occasion.

STF3 That's the one who pushes our anxiety up.

STF1 That's why I thought it's better off me not. And vice a versa STF4.

STF2 No cos it's interesting to know that cos it's an SME it's a small organisation you may think about it more than if it was a larger organisation. So, you go home thinking about the business itself rather than just your job. That's why I'm just wanting to see if that ever does ever happen.

STF1 Cos with a large organisation should as a general rule be a bit more stable shouldn't it.

STF2 Yeah you say that.

STF1 Well yeah.

STF2 That's how I got made redundant the last time, we got taken over and closed down. I think we're a lot more involved because we're that much closer you know to the, all the other levels. So, you, I've said, my feeling is that I'm part of it and I feel a part of it.

STF5 Yeah but in this end say the managers, where they have around stress or anxiety they know how to, away with us for that situation so that's fine

DA Good. So, can I sort of finalise by asking you guys as a final question, so any thing you think in particular to an SME that would cause more anxiety because it's an SME, anything else you'd like to add on? Because it's the nature of the business, the size of the business.

STF3 the sort of the volatility of the work I suppose. Yeah, it's how do they pay the bill, and how do, who is going to be paying bills and, cos bigger companies can swallow a lot of things. This company might necessarily can't.

DA OK good, anything you'd like to add on at all that you think might be interesting for me to think about, you know for this research and looking at SMEs and anxiety. Any tips, any suggestions?

STF1 No.

STF2 Other than what we've said I don't think we can elaborate any more than that.

DA Oh great, wonderful, well thank you, thank you so much for your time I really appreciate it cos it's a good chance to get to look at things from a wider perspective. So, thank you so much for your time. And like I said I'm going to transcribe the discussions and I'm happy to send you copies so that you can see that everything you've said is what I've written down. It's going to be anonymous as well. So, thank you. Thank you so much.

STF3 OK.

STF4 Cheers.

DA Thanks a lot. Thank you.

STF2 Cheers guys.

DA Thank you.

End of transcription.

Appendix I: Data Analysis and Sources Map- Excel Spreadsheet

Entrepreneur/Business Owners Interviews(E/BO) Participants

Entrepreneurial SME Interviews and Focus Group Participants

	E/BO Pilot Focus Group	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	CE1	CO1	HD1	HD2	HD3	SM1	SM2	MA1	IT1	AD1	ST Q 1	ST Q 2	ST Q 3	ST Q 4	ST Q 5	ST Q 6	ST Q 7	ST Q 8	ST Q 9	ST Q 10	ST Q 11	ST Q 12	ST Q 13	ST Q 14	ST Focus Group	CEO 2nd INT	CEO 2nd INT	HD1	HD2	SM1 2nd INT	MA1 2nd INT					
Broad Themes from Data Analysis																																																	
The Nature of Anxieties in Enterprises	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Causes of Anxiety for SME are different due to its size	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Restructure and volatile nature of entrepreneurial SME				x	x									x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x																										
Anxiety impacts decision making	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Defenses Against Anxiety	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x																										
Other members of staff creating anxiety											x	x	x				x	x		x	x	x	x																										
Leadership decisions and actions creating anxieties						^		^		x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x																											
Anxiety as Entrepreneurial Leader	x	x	x	x	x	^	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x																																	
Sense of Others' Anxieties (when other people are anxious –	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x																											
The Personal Challenges of Anxiety (Physical)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x																														
The Personal Challenges of Anxiety (Emotional)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x																														
Experiencing anxiety due to role	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Experiencing Anxiety as Business Owner/Entrepreneurs/Lead	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x																															
Anxiety and Excitement: The Positive Effects of Anxiety	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x																										
Anxiety and Excitement: The Negative Effects of Anxiety	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x																										
Meanings of Anxiety	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Defenses Against Anxiety	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x																										
Causes of Anxiety	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Anxiety is socially embedded		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			

- Key:**
- E/BO Focus Group had 8 participants
 - P1 to P12 EBOs
 - CE1 and CO1(SME Founder and Entrepreneur)
 - HD: Head of Dept
 - SM: Senior Manager
 - MA: Manager
 - IT: IT staff
 - AD: Admin Staff
 - STF: Staff Focus Group had 5 participants
 - STQ: Staff Questionnaire
 - INT: Interview

Grey Highlight means no response/did not agree
 x means response provided/agreed

Entrepreneur/Business Owners Interviews(INT)

Entrepreneurial SME Interviews and Focus Group

Themes for the literature

	E/BO Focus Group	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	CE1	CO1	HD 1st INT	HD2 1st INT	HD3 1st INT	SM1 1st INT	SM2 1st INT	MA1 1st INT	IT1	AD1	STQ 1	STQ 2	STQ 3	STQ 4	STQ 5	STQ 6	STQ 7	STQ 8	STQ 9	STQ 10	STQ 11	STQ 12	STQ 13	STQ 14	ST Focus Group	CE1 2nd INT	CO1 2nd INT	HD1 2nd INT	HD2 2nd INT	SM1 2nd INT	MA1 2nd INT			
Themes from Literature																																															
Affect, cognition, socially embedded in entrepreneurship	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Anxiety interchanged with fear, failure, negative emotion	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Emotions are socially constructed, collective in nature, multi-level		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x																								
Social defenses against anxiety	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x																								
Nature of the enterprise, "condition of smallness", size of SMEs, family firms, create a paradox	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Paradox lens applied to tensions and contradictions				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x																								

Key:

E/BO Focus Group had 8 participants

P1 to P12 EBOs

CE1 and CO1(SME Founder and Entrepreneur)

HD: Head of Dept

SM: Senior Manager

MA: Manager

IT: IT staff

AD: Admin Staff

STF: Staff Focus Group had 5 participants

STQ: Staff Questionnaire

INT: Interview

Grey Highlight means no response/did not agree

x means response provided/agreed

Appendix J: Analysis of Anxiety for SME Case Study Organization

Categories	Themes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Definitions of anxiety (worry, fear, stress, nervous, desperate, uncertainty, the unknown) 	<p>Meanings given to anxiety</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Anxiety is an everyday experience 3. Volatile nature of an entrepreneurial SME 4. A sense of urgency 5. Workload pressures 6. Financial worries and uncertainties: 7. Restructure of organisation 8. Size of the SME 9. Anxieties about partnerships, joint ventures and investors 	<p>The nature of anxieties for SMEs</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Executive decisions causing anxiety 11. Anxieties about finances for the SME 12. Anxieties about winning work/ contracts 13. Risks linked to expanding to developing countries 14. Anxieties over people and performance. 15. Anxieties about the client. 16. Anxieties about recruiting staff overseas 17. Anxieties about fast growth and resources 18. Anxieties from the external environment. 19. Tight deadlines 20. Failure of projects 	<p>Causes of anxiety</p>

21. Anxiety is a social emotion exists at all levels of the enterprise	Anxiety is socially embedded in enterprises
22. Senior Managers perspectives 23. Staff perspectives	Anxiety caused by (entrepreneurial) leadership
24. Sharing and communicating anxieties with others	Communication of anxiety
25. The anxieties of others in team and organization: 26. The anxieties of the entrepreneurial leaders	Sense of others' anxieties
27. Rationalization: 28. Protection: individual and team members 29. Professionalism 30. Splitting work and personal anxieties 31. Common purpose of an entrepreneurial SME 32. Denial of anxiety	Defences against anxiety
33. The physical experience of anxiety. 34. The emotional experience of anxiety	Experiences of anxiety
35. As entrepreneurial leader's anxiety 36. Management anxiety 37. Staff member anxiety	The personal challenges of anxiety

38. Responsibilities and expectations	
39. Anxiety has personal consequences	
40. Anxiety has physical consequences	
41. Anxiety helps to motivate and demotivates	The positive and negative effects of anxiety

Appendix K: EURAM Conference Paper (Allen, Gear and Vince 2017)



ANXIETY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A PILOT STUDY OF SMES

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Category: 03 ENTREPRENEURSHIP >> 03_04 ENTREPRENEURIAL EMOTIONS AND PASSION

Access to this paper is restricted to registered delegates of the EURAM 2017 (European Academy of Management) Conference.

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Anxiety and Entrepreneurship- A pilot study of SMEs

Introduction

This paper aims to uncover the nature and experiences of the emotion of anxiety in Small to Medium -Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and forms part of the PhD research by one of the authors. We share the findings of our pilot study of a group of SME entrepreneurs/business owners. We aim to stimulate discussion on entrepreneurial anxieties within SMEs and share our findings in order to encourage further research.

Our research suggests that anxiety is an integral and everyday aspect of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs' feelings of anxiety can be associated with money, contracts, risk, performance, client relationships and external pressures; there are emotional and physical consequences to anxiety for entrepreneurs; and too much anxiety can inhibit growth, undermine partnerships and inform poor decision-making (Rosen, 2008). Anxiety is also an emotion that is fundamentally implicated in the excitement of entrepreneurship. We think that it is important to know more about the ways in which anxiety is involved in entrepreneurial behaviour and action, and our pilot study begins to outline some key themes and issues. Through our pilot study we address the questions: what is anxiety for entrepreneurs and how can anxiety be understood as an aspect of entrepreneurship in the context of SMEs?

In this paper we are starting to outline a new area of study for emotion and entrepreneurship, one that recognizes the significance of anxiety. We highlight three dimensions to our findings that we think can frame an understanding of anxiety and entrepreneurship. At an organizational level, we found that enterprises do not simply suffer from the effects of personal or collective

anxieties about survival; they also require anxiety as part of sustaining a desire to grow. As a social process, anxiety holds communities together in ways that may undermine the ability to grow the enterprise. There is an on-going struggle with social defences (Krantz, 2010) that restrict anxiety-provoking activity; insulate people from the consequences of their actions; and protect people from the prospect of uncomfortable emotions coming to the surface. At a personal level, we found that anxiety can consume people, spoil hopes and undermine control. However, it also motivates, excites, and offers opportunities to pay attention to the need for change. For the individual, anxiety is behind moments of intense feeling at challenging or difficult times, but it is also an everyday part of being an entrepreneur.

In the following sections of the paper we outline the relevant literature and key concepts on anxiety and entrepreneurship. We present the design, methods, and analysis of our pilot study and then develop our key findings through an extended discussion. In our conclusion we reflect on the implications of our findings for future research.

Literature Review

Anxiety as a personal and social emotion within organizational contexts

Affect is used as an umbrella term used when discussing emotions and the different types of subjective feelings that contribute to the experience of emotion (Cardon et al., 2012). Anxiety is an example of an emotional experience (Vince and Gabriel 2011). For the purposes of this research, anxiety is defined using the common understanding of anxiety: a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. Anxiety is fear without an object. Something to be avoided or controlled as it “incites the feeling of being uncomfortable “(Salecl, 2004 quoted in Vince, R. 2010). This definition of anxiety focuses on situational or state anxiety and not the clinical definition of anxiety which focus on trait anxiety. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) created by Spielberger et al.,

(1983) is a self-report test used to assess state and trait anxiety. Spielberger and Reihseiser (2009) explain how both forms of anxiety are differentiated in the STAI. State anxiety is defined as fear, nervousness, discomfort induced by different situations arousing the autonomic nervous system, whereas trait anxiety is more of a personal characteristic, where feelings of fear, stress, worry, discomfort are experienced on a daily basis, linking to anxiety proneness. Historically, research on emotion focused on biological and psychological “determinism” but there is now a shift to the “social and relational context of emotion” (Fineman 2000, P.3). In this research, the focus is on the emotion of anxiety from a social and relational context.

The expectation of danger relates both to individuals’ feelings and to the construction and enactment of such feelings within a social setting. Entrepreneurship is socially constructed through ‘selective and emotional processes that produce storylines, emplotment, and narrative structure, support sense making and action making’ (Downing, 2005 p. 185). Anxiety can be constructed relationally and socially in ways that create and sustain organizational unease, so that organizational members are perpetually uncomfortable about (e.g.) the consequences of becoming exposed (Gabriel, 2012). For example, Vince and Saleem (2004) show how pervasive anxieties about being punished for speaking out, undermined communication and reflection both within and across the boundaries of teams and departments in an organization. Therefore, in addition to its intra-personal manifestations, anxiety can be understood as a *social emotion*, one of a range of ‘emotions that pertain to the state of social relations... that hold communities together in institutional processes’ (Creed et al, 2013 p.7).

An important aspect of understanding anxiety in relation to organizations is the acknowledgement of its structuring as well as behavioural effects. Individuals’ anxieties are often imagined having detrimental effects and therefore to be a block to contented and effective work. In an attempt to defend against anxiety, organizational processes and practices emerge

that seek to reduce the perceived harmful nature of these effects. One of the first studies to identify the functioning of defences against anxiety was Menzies' (1960) research into nursing services in a general hospital. She found that organizational approaches to scheduling, decision-making and work assignment 'created a depersonalized and fragmented pattern of care. Coupled with infantilizing management practices, the system promoted dependency, ritualistic work, impersonal relationships with patients, and other characteristics that had the effect of shielding nurses from the painful anxieties stimulated by close and intimate contact with patients and their families' (Krantz, 2010: p. 193). Therefore, while practices, policies and authority relations exist to facilitate work, they also provide opportunities to eliminate situations that expose people to anxiety-provoking activity and to insulate people from the consequences of their actions.

Social defences against anxiety are (largely) unconscious dynamics that become attached to structures, practices, policies and authority relations, and are used for the purpose of collectively managing anxiety. In enterprises, there is often a need to develop the ability to quickly embed decisions, or to rapidly make changes. However, the prospect of change can be accompanied by frightening emotional experiences coming to the surface (Cacciotti and Hayton, 2015). This, in turn, stimulates resistance to change and offers insight into why attempts at change may fail despite how sensible they might seem at the time (Krantz, 2010). Anxiety is a double-edged emotion for organizational actors. For example, anxiety can both undermine the desire to act in support of change and at the same time provide the impetus needed to push forward towards change (Vince and Martin, 1993). We think that it is important to study the tensions inherent in peoples' experiences of anxiety in enterprises because such experiences can help to reveal underlying emotional and political dynamics that have profound

implications for the ability of enterprises to grow and change. In addition, such tensions offer important information for improving our understanding of anxiety as an entrepreneurial emotion.

Entrepreneurship and emotion

Entrepreneurial emotion refers to ‘the affect, emotions, moods and/or feelings – of individuals or a collective – that are antecedent to, concurrent with, and/or a consequence of the entrepreneurial process, meaning the recognition/ creation, evaluation, reformulation, and/or the exploitation of possible opportunity’ (Cardon et al, 2012: p.3). Entrepreneurship is a process emphasizing innovation of products, processes, services, new markets and forms of organizing. It has been defined as ‘the process through which individuals recognize and exploit business opportunities by founding new ventures’ (Cacciotti and Hayton, 2015 p. 168). Much existing research identifies the entrepreneur as central to the process, starting from a personal vision of what might be created, but also typically becoming a group of people sharing and implementing that vision. However, recent perspectives have also examined the broader contexts within which entrepreneurship takes place. They put forward a conceptualization of entrepreneurship as ‘an unfolding of everyday practices’ that stem from ‘the assumption that entrepreneurial practices are inevitably socially embedded’ (de Clercq and Voronov, 2009 p. 396). We think that this shift towards comprehending the socially embedded nature of entrepreneurship (in addition to a focus on the entrepreneur) can be further enhanced through the study of emotion and entrepreneurship.

Until recently, emotion was a neglected concept within entrepreneurship research, primarily because it was seen as a subordinate concern to the more rational aspects of information processing and decision-making (Goss 2008). However, it has also been acknowledged that ‘people start new businesses for non-rational reasons’ (Hunter, 2012 p. 120), and that

entrepreneurship is ‘not necessarily a rational process’, but one that can be influenced by, for example, a compulsion to control, an underlying sense of distrust, a desire for approval, patterns of defensiveness (Kets de Vries, 1996), and by a range of emotionally informed ‘misconceptions’ and ‘myths’ (Hunter, 2012 p. 102).

Fear has tended to be examined as a barrier to entrepreneurial behaviour, undermining the notion that it can be both beneficial as well as detrimental (Cacciotti and Hayton, 2015). In particular, studies have connected entrepreneurs’ feelings of fear to failure of opportunity or outcome (Arenius and Minniti 2005; Hessels et al. 2011; Koellinger et al. 2013; Wennberg et al. 2013; Wood et al. 2014). Cacciotti and Hayton (2015) suggest that the majority of empirical studies of fear in entrepreneurship address the theme of fear of failure. The problem they identify is that, as a consequence, ‘the role of failure in entrepreneurship may have reinforced a tendency to think that failing is what entrepreneurs fear the most’ (p. 169). Such a resolute focus on fear of failure has undermined researchers’ abilities to acknowledge the paradoxical tensions produced by fear (and, in our view, by anxiety).

There is currently a very limited literature on the relationship between anxiety and entrepreneurship. One reason for this may be that fear and anxiety are terms that have been ‘used interchangeably to describe the same psychological phenomenon’ (Cacciotti and Hayton, 2015: p. 168). Our view is that this has limited researchers’ ability to point towards the distinctive features of anxiety and the impact of this emotion on entrepreneurship at multi-levels of analysis. We are therefore providing an academic starting point from which to understand anxiety at multi-levels of analysis and to communicate the potential benefits of such research.

Research Design, Methods and Analysis

Our research design is qualitative, interpretive, and informed by a social constructionist

epistemology. The design represents an exploratory research process, which is appropriate for research themes at the early stages of their theoretical and empirical development (Collis & Hussey, 2003). We sought to identify the feelings, perceptions and experiences of entrepreneurs on anxiety in the context of their businesses and their practices of entrepreneurship. In addition, we were interested in understanding the role of anxiety in social relations within enterprises and the ways in which anxiety might be implicated in both supporting and preventing effective action. The broad questions that informed the development of our design were: what is anxiety for entrepreneurs and how can anxiety be understood as an aspect of entrepreneurship?

A study was initiated based on semi-structured interviews with twelve SME entrepreneurs. The definition of what constitute an SME is taken from the European Union definition as shown in Table I below. The case study organization fall within the size limits of small to medium-sized enterprises contained in the EU definition; that is, those employing between 0 and 249 people.

Table 1- SME Categories

Company category	Employees	Turnover	or	Balance sheet total
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ € 50 m		≤ € 43 m
Small	< 50	≤ € 10 m		≤ € 10 m
Micro	< 10	≤ € 2 m		≤ € 2 m

The interviews encouraged participants to respond openly about their understanding of anxiety and to share experiences and narratives relating to anxiety within their enterprises. Participants were asked inter alia, to give their own definitions and interpretations of anxiety, if and how they shared their anxieties , how business decisions were affected by their anxieties and how

others in their organizations were affected as a result. The interviewees were all experienced entrepreneurs within a variety of small business environments, including: professional services, insurance, retail, construction, graphic design, consulting, lighting manufacturers, electrical contractors, interior designers and project management services. Interviews lasted approximately one hour; they were digitally recorded and transcribed, producing 125 pages of transcriptions. The lead author and author three separately analyzed the data using an inductive process of open coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Wide-ranging categories were identified within the data that could be associated with anxiety. Using axial coding (Wicks, 2010), these categories were then clustered into a set of 27 first order concepts or characteristics, and finally grouped into eight, second order themes (see, for example, Corley & Gioia, 2004). The relationship between our first-order concepts (with illustrative quotes) and the eight key thematic areas we identified are presented in Table 1 (below).

Table 2: Data Structure

Concepts

Themes

The physical experience of anxiety: ('I don't sleep well'; 'I get short tempered'; 'the world gets too big... get backache'; 'tiredness'; 'it stops people... debilitating'; 'it spoils the rest of your life'; 'it can consume you').

Experiencing

Anxiety as

The emotional experience of anxiety 1: (*Fear...* 'of not knowing'; 'of the unknown'; 'of failing'; 'of letting people down'; 'of what we can't control').

Entrepreneurs

The emotional experience of anxiety 2: (*Worry/ Concern... 'feeling apprehensive'; 'stuckness'; 'sad that things are not... as they should be'*).

Anxiety about Money: ('so it's money'; 'it's cash, cash is the key'; '95% is money'; 'it comes down to money at the end of the day').

Anxiety about Winning Work/ Contracts: ('where the next piece of work is coming from for sure'; 'every day I don't win work is a day I notice okay').

Anxiety arising from Risk: ('It's high risk... we made a number of decisions where we were days away from being completely insolvent'; 'to what extent you are willing to risk not having a buffer').

*Causes of Anxiety for
Entrepreneurs*

Anxiety over People and Performance: ('I'm really busting the guts to come up with your salary and you are not pulling your weight').

Anxiety About the Client: ('You don't want to upset the client, you want to keep a good client relationship because you're looking at well maybe more work after this one').

Anxieties from the External Environment – for example, regulation and bureaucracy: ('the government pulling the rug from under our feet'; everything seems to be in the employee's favor... you have got to follow certain procedures').

Responsibilities and Expectations: ('I feel very responsible (for)... people and making sure that they are paid'; I do set very high expectations on myself. It impacts on my family, then I feel like I am letting the family down, then it's a bit of a vicious circle, because if I am anxious about something from a work point of view, I tend to try and work harder and you get sucked in'; 'I hope I never have to do another start up, I really do. It's not a job, it's something, I mean it's not a child, but it is somewhere between a job and a child').

Anxiety has personal consequences: ('I would be a nervous wreck all the time because we are high stress'; '(I get) bogged down thinking about it too much'; 'I analyze everything too much. That's me. That's just what I do'; 'wrought. Very much pulled apart, put back together again badly. Stretched out, scrunched up, twisted, stretched'; 'One of the characteristics of anxiety as a response to pressure is that it's very easy to hear or to tell oneself lies about what's going on, how one feels, what one should do').

The Personal Challenges of Anxiety for Entrepreneurs

Anxiety has physical consequences: ('I actually take it, it feels, it hurts me, it physically makes me angry when a customer isn't happy because I want us, the company to have done well'; I think for me... physical exhaustion is probably the most prevalent. I think kind of being distracted... I was physically present, but I was somewhere else'; 'well at times we did feel physically sick because we - we didn't feel in control because we didn't know what they were going to do').

Anxiety demotivates: ('it's about losing interest in the world and things in the world. Not wanting to see or be with people'; 'if I do get bad anxiety, I just go in myself,

don't want to talk to nobody and I just go quiet. After one or two days and then I snap out and go back to normal again'; 'I am a fairly cautious person... my anxiety about the future of the organization will cause me not to take risks').

Anxiety helps to motivate: ('I kind of need a certain degree of stress just to keep me going'; 'I like excitement and edge').

Rationalization: ('My response to anxiety or not knowing, is to do a lot of research, to find out, to get everything, all my ducks lined up'; 'it could force us to make quick decisions sometimes that aren't necessarily the right ones')

Protection: ('You can't share too much with the staff because we're trying not to get them stressed. So, we try to protect them as much as possible'; For a firm like ours... even if we feel anxious, they [client] mustn't see it. There's got to be some form of clever camouflage. It's just controlling it, isn't it?')

Entrepreneurs'

Defenses Against

Anxiety

Professionalism: ('There's this expectation that if you're in business then you need to be the ultimate professional... you need to show people this professional mask all the time').

Splitting Work and Family: ('I guess, I've always been more of a private person. I share my feelings with my family... I don't talk much about it to people at work').

Gendered Stereotypes: ('I am a bloke and we're not, I don't think men generally are terribly good at that and I'm as - well I see myself as a fairly typical male and those sorts of things in bottling things up - well not bottling, I wouldn't bottle - but I would certainly keep things to my chest, close to my chest and I would say it's my job to manage my anxiety'; 'We are fabricators, it's not a rough and ready trade but it's a man's trade if you know what I mean. We are rough and ready kind of men who work with our hands').

The Anxieties of Others (They): ('Anybody who suffers with anxiety, generally, *they are not themselves are they?*'; 'there were certain individuals at certain points in the process, who just needed to know more than anyone else. And they needed to know more than anyone else because they were freaking out'; 'I think they are probably anxious if they are uncertain about where the business is going'; 'It is a family... people would kind of bumble along and kind go about their daily stuff and then suddenly, you know, something small will happen and because of the background of stress inherent in their workplace, they might react more severely than they normally otherwise would; 'It's almost like they let it take them over to the point where they then say, actually I just don't know what to do about it. And they feel like every time they turn around they're just staring at the same brick wall...').

Entrepreneurs'

Sense of

Others' Anxieties

From the Leader's Perspective: ('I think it is important for leaders to really show interest and acknowledgement in the things that concern their staff'; 'You've got to speak to them normally, to keep their anxiety levels down and their performance up'; 'As the boss... I keep my worries, and I try not to let them know what's happening within the organization... I don't want to put them under worry for something that

may never happen'; 'That ability to stand aside... I think that's the most difficult thing about running a family business is that the difficulty of wearing multiple hats and I think it takes a particular type of person to be able to do that').

Anxiety and (Entrepreneurial) Leadership

From the Follower's Perspective: ('His style of management isn't supportive. It isn't a kind of, let's do this together, let's see what we can do... It's - well get it done. I don't care how. That's your problem'; 'I suppose well from an anxiety point of view, people tread on eggshells around him').

Positive Effects: ('I need a certain degree of stress just to keep me going'; 'If you are not anxious, you don't suffer with it, and you're not bothered and get flippant. You are probably not giving them a service they deserve'; 'For me anxiety produces a form of adrenalin. And if you haven't got the adrenalin, there is nothing at the other end worth doing. Along with anxiety comes a buzz'; 'In a business sense an anxious feeling, an anxious response might be your intuition saying something needs changing'; 'The pressures that induce anxiety... are potentially very good stimuli for re-evaluation and making changes to strategy').

Anxiety and Excitement: The Positive Effects of Anxiety

The Benefits and Detriments of Being Small: ('SME are like families and as people get to know each other and be known by other people. I think that, that is the power of the SME... you can open up about stuff that is going on in your life that you are worried about and people will support you... The flip side of that is that, it's quite a brutal place to work. So, there aren't many punches pulled. If you think something about, you just come out and say it'; 'I suppose as a business we don't like people who

get stressed because it has an impact on everyone else. I mean we're only a small business, so it avoids the politics bit').

The Tensions of Partnerships: ('I think that is a stress and linked into that is the whole area round partnerships. Because, I mean, partnerships are with the suppliers and with distributors the organizations you need to work with. If they don't perform, if they don't work well, then that has a direct impact on your ability to trade and also on your ability raise more money in the future'; 'frequently we are in a situation where the partners or the customers we are working with have unrealistic in our opinion views as to what could be achieved and when. But as a small organization and with the need to grow and manage the business, there is I guess a certain amount of pressure to deliver on timescales even if we believe they are unrealistic').

*The Nature of
Anxieties in
Enterprises*

A Sense of Urgency: ('There's no respite [in family businesses]'; 'I switch off the lights when the sun is shining because I don't want to spend the extra pound on having the lights on... it all matters, you know, and if it takes a big corporate a week rather than a day to respond on a decision, then that matters. It will affect your eventual outcome. So, there is that sense of urgency around stuff'; 'People are anxious about the delivery of the projects, revenue towards our business... people always have a certain level of anxiety around the things that they are delivering. Can they deliver on time and will they get the impact that is expected')?

Financial Worries and Uncertainties: ('If you are not paying yourself, that's money that you can sort of pay somebody else and we have an overdraft as well. We've lived in an overdraft for quite a long time'; 'we are going to put everything into this and try and get through it'; 'there was a time when we just didn't have the projects coming in or the projects that were coming in were very high risk, low reward projects. And that was very definitely an anxiety-inducing environment').

Using our data structure, we analyzed the eight second-order themes in order to distinguish multi-levels of anxiety (organizational, social and personal). These are outlined in Table 2 (below) alongside brief descriptions of the main characteristics of each of the eight themes.

Table 3: Multi-Level Dimensions of Anxiety and Entrepreneurship

Organizational

The Nature of Anxieties in Enterprises (the ‘condition of smallness’; the tensions of partnerships; a sense of urgency; financial worries and uncertainties).

Social

(Anxiety as a social emotion)

Causes of Anxiety for Entrepreneurs
(money, risk and people).

Entrepreneurs’ Defenses Against Anxiety
(the need to rationalize anxiety away; a tendency to protect – ‘don’t share too much’; trying to be ‘the ultimate professional’; splitting home and work – ‘feelings belong in the family’; imagining that ‘men are not good at emotion’).

Anxiety and Entrepreneurial Leadership

(the idea that the leader needs to ‘keep their anxiety down’).

Personal

(The personal feelings and contradictions associated with anxiety)

The Personal Challenges of Anxiety for

Entrepreneurs (feeling very responsible; anxiety has a high price – e.g. ‘telling oneself lies about what’s going on’; the physical effects of anxiety – e.g. ‘it hurts’; anxiety demotivates – ‘I lose interest’ and it motivates – ‘I like the excitement and edge’.)

Experiencing Anxiety as Entrepreneurs

(fear ‘of what we can’t control’; and worry/ concern that ‘things are not as they should be’.)

Entrepreneurs' Sense of Others' Anxieties

(when other people are anxious – ‘they are not themselves are they’.)

Anxiety and Excitement: The Positive

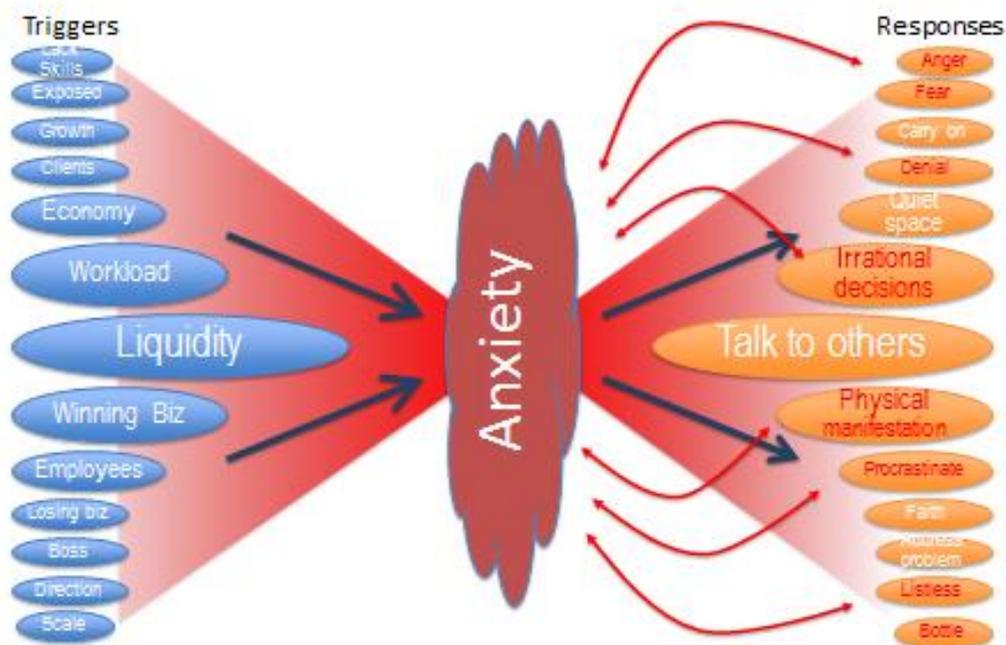
Effects of Anxiety (‘an anxious feeling, an anxious response might be your intuition saying that something needs changing’.)

In addition, and subsequent to the analysis of the data undertaken by the authors of this paper, permission was obtained for the interview transcripts to be used in a five-day course for doctoral students learning about the analysis of qualitative data (run by author three). Sixteen doctoral students spent two days analyzing the interview transcripts. They worked in four groups of four and were invited to code the material, develop themes from the data, and to select dimensions from the data that were relevant to theory building. They were asked to make group presentations and to discuss their analysis and their findings in detail. In their presentations, each group talked about how they had moved through their initial coding, through the identification of themes, and towards a set of key findings or dimensions that could provide a basis for theory building.

We do refer to all four presentations in this paper because there was considerable overlap with our own analysis of the data. We do not find this surprising, given the small size of the data

set. In addition, the focus for the doctoral students was on learning about and reflecting on the experience of doing qualitative analysis as much as the results of the analysis. However, we do want to briefly present the findings of one of the groups. In this group, three of the members were scholarly practitioners, two doing part-time PhDs while working (a senior social worker and a senior marketing consultant), one taking a break from work to do a full-time PhD (a former company director). We thought that this added an interesting practitioner perspective on the pilot study data, as well as a different approach to the analysis of the dataset. Using NVivo software, they identified a range of themes associated with ‘triggers of anxiety’ and ‘responses to anxiety’ and developed a model. (see Figure 1, below).

Figure 1: The ‘Anxiety Funnel’: The dynamics between triggers and responses



The relative scale of the themed boxes represents the occurrence of different responses to each theme within the data set. In their representation, triggers, such as liquidity, workload and the

pressures of winning business are ‘funnelled’ into fostering anxiety within the enterprise. The implication of their analysis is that this intensifies the anxieties in the enterprise, creating (in their terms) ‘an exposed workplace’. Some responses, including talking to others and finding quiet space, were identified as positive responses that helped participants to work through anxiety. Others, including irrational decision-making, physical manifestations of anxiety, procrastination and denial, were identified as negative responses, which fed back to reinforce feelings of anxiety within the individual and the enterprise. Their analysis was particularly interesting to us because it was done by a group of practitioners, and also because of the attention they gave to the way in which individuals’ responses to anxiety might *both* relieve and reinforce anxiety in the enterprise.

Discussion

Our analysis offers a starting point for understanding anxiety and entrepreneurship. In this section of the paper we elaborate on the dynamics that emerged from our analysis developed from the interview data.

The organizational context of anxiety in enterprises

We think that the desire for a comfort zone of control and sustainability, at least in part, is due to the ongoing anxieties that result from internal and external tensions, continuous resourcing issues, from an ever-present sense of urgency in the business, and from financial worries and uncertainties. We found that anxiety both supported and undermined action. It could inform both ‘your intuition saying that something needs changing’ and ‘telling oneself lies about

what's going on'. Our view is that 'the condition of smallness' is not only a description of a systemic process in which the general characteristics of small businesses can inhibit their own growth (Anderson & Ullah, 2014), but also an underlying emotional process informed by the contradictions that are created within small firms by anxiety.

Central among the organizational dynamics of anxiety for entrepreneurs are financial worries and uncertainties ('it's cash, cash is the key'; '95% is money'; 'it comes down to money at the end of the day').

Anxiety as a social emotion in enterprises

The main causes of anxiety for the entrepreneurs in our study were money, risk and (other) people. Responses to these pressures provide us with insights about defences against anxiety that are used in an attempt to control such unwanted feelings within enterprises. Here we are referring to anxiety as a 'social emotion', not the feelings that belong to individuals (their personal envy, joy, disappointment, or shame) but emotions 'that pertain to the state of social relations... that hold communities together' (Creed et al, 2014 p. 7). One way to understand anxiety as a social emotion is by identifying the social defences against anxiety that endeavour to keep it at bay. As we mentioned in our literature review, social defences are (unconscious) dynamics that become attached to organizational structures, practices, policies and authority relations and are used for the purpose of collectively managing anxiety (Menzies, 1960; Bain, 1998; Krantz and Gilmore, 1990). Social defences both help organizational members to manage anxiety-provoking situations, *and* they hinder organizations by insulating people from the consequences of their actions (Krantz, 2010). Our interviews showed a variety of different individual defences. These included: attempts to rationalize away anxiety; attempts to protect staff from anxiety through 'clever camouflage'; through wearing a 'professional mask all the

time'; by splitting emotions between work and family ('I don't talk much about it to people at work'); and through gendered justifications ('I don't think men generally are terribly good at that'). These responses become enacted through authority relations and start to characterize and then define behaviour. In our sample, anxiety was primarily perceived as a danger to survival, a threat to the functioning of the enterprise.

Personal feelings associated with anxiety

The personal challenges of anxiety for entrepreneurs stem from the overall intensity of the entrepreneurial environment and the extreme uncertainty and risk involved (Baron, 2008). Personal feelings tend to be amplified. In our sample, individuals felt 'very responsible' for others; that 'it hurts', 'it spoils the rest of your life', and 'it can consume you'; that fear 'of failing', 'of letting people down', of 'not being in control', of 'the unknown' are all part of the emotional experience of uncertainty and risk. Personal perceptions of others' anxieties were also amplified to the extent that other people did not seem like themselves ('they are not themselves are they'); were seen as excessively needy ('they needed to know more than anyone else because they were freaking out'); or were overcome by anxiety ('it is almost like they let it take them over'). On the other hand, anxiety did not solely hurt, spoil or consume. It excited and motivated ('for me anxiety produces a form of adrenalin. And if you haven't got the adrenalin, there is nothing at the other end worth doing. Along with anxiety comes a buzz'); and it provided opportunities for paying attention to potentially important issues. ('In a business sense an anxious feeling, an anxious response might be your intuition saying something needs changing', 'the pressures that induce anxiety... are potentially very good stimuli for re-evaluation and making changes to strategy').

Conclusion

While we are aware that a pilot study provides limited opportunities to generate knowledge, we also think that this paper makes a strong initial contribution in an area that has been neglected. It provides a starting point for understanding how anxiety is experienced through contradictions at multi-levels of. We hope to see more research emerge in this specific area because we see theoretical possibilities and practical benefits to acknowledging and understanding that entrepreneurship generates anxiety and anxiety is an integral and everyday aspect of entrepreneurship.

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