Tanbat interview

KA: Great (.) um (.) ((clears throat)) so first of all um just some general questions to get you into the flow of things um I'd love for you to tell me a little bit about yourself and this could be anything this could be your hobbies It could be (.) um (.) you know things you really like or things you dislike just tell me a little bit about yourself

Tanbat: ((pause)) Oh cool yeah. So my name is [REMOVED]

KA: Mmhm

Tanbat: Uh I'm in grade ten in a secondary school. So eh my hobbies I think I love football I watch football a lot eh sometimes I used to play football but I no longer play but I like football sometimes

KA: Mm what team do you support?

Tanbat: I (.) I support eh Chelsea

KA: Ahh ((laughs))

Tanbat: ((laughs)) What team do you support?

KA: Hmm I don't really follow football that much um but my dad really supports Everton so ((laughs))

Tanbat: Oh well yeah (.) so sometimes I watch football and I also like listening to some music also

KA: Mm me too me too

Tanbat: Yeah

KA: ((overlaps)) cool

Tanbat: ((overlaps)) I think ((pause)) yeah cool

KA: Yeah definitely definitely (.) And how about um your experiences with autism? So would you mind telling me a little bit about how old you were when you were diagnosed and some things like that?

Tanbat: ((clicks tongue)) ((pause)) Ah yeah so uh my (.) like my experience with autism uh ((pause)) when I was in school like my parents uh realised like I had some problems

KA: Mm

Tanbat: Sorry are you able to hear me?

KA: Yes yes I can hear you just fine

Tanbat: Yeah so ah OK so my parents like realised I had problems like socialising and uh like getting on with my fellow students at school so (.) again I had some difficulties and some speech difficulties like I was er (.) my speech like was not so fine so (.) they had some discussions with me then (.) again when they realised that it was something that (.) it was not getting better

KA: Mm

Tanbat: because at first they (.) thought it would just get better and I'll be fine but then they realised it was not getting better like so they realised it was hurting me because I was not able to socialise myself to my fellow students at school

KA: Yeah

Tanbat: I was as much as like anxious many things. So they just decided to look for some consultations a psychologist in a certain hospital around our home

KA: Mm

Tanbat: so I went there. I talked to the (.) yeah (.) I talked to the psychologist. They talked to my parents and so uh ((pause)) they did some research and asked me some questions then later uh (.) I think that's when later (.) it took some time but uh later they told my parents that I was autistic

KA: Hmm. Um can you remember how old you were when this was happening?

Tanbat: It was I think (.) well I was in school in still in school lower class I think I was about uh eight around eight years I cannot remember the exact date but around eight

KA: OK

Tanbat: Eight nine

KA: Yeah yeah that’s fine cool. And how about your experiences with anxiety? Um You know can you remember when you first started noticing that you were feeling quite anxious?

Tanbat: Yeah ok the first time like I was (.) I realised I was being quite anxious I think ahh ((pause)) uh I had my cousin (.) my cousin was sick so uh I was schooling with him in the same school so he was sick he was like so seriously ill sick

KA: Oh I’m so sorry

Tanbat: So was taken to hospital (.) and I became like it affected me like so much (.) I (.) it it affected me like for a whole a whole month I was not able to go to school even I was I was uh I was so anxious like I was so afraid. Like what (.) uh (.) what's gonna happen? That is like that's the first time and uh that experience. But I've been nervous at like so many experiences but just a little pain can make me so anxious like even if my team loses a game a football game I get so anxious man I am so afraid like (.) uh (.) it has just been affecting me for a while

KA: Yeah and how does that anxiety feel to you?

Tanbat: Uh sometimes it feels ((pause)) like feels so bad um ((pause)) ((inaudible)) sometimes you feel like you are not doing the right thing like you are you are just on the wrong side. So it makes you feel like feel bad because you feel like your emotions- like maybe someone not understanding your emotions (.) eh (.) but maybe someone may take that the thing causing you to be anxious as a small thing a very little thing but for me it's so big it's like it's causing me to too much trouble so it (.) it affects me quite much

KA: Yeah yeah. And sometimes um in psychology we try to split anxiety up into different parts and some of those parts are like the thoughts we have that are anxious um and then another part is the emotions we have then another part is the behaviour and then the last part is the

way it feels in our body. Um (.) so I just wondered are there any of those four things that you think are especially noticeable for you when you're anxious? You know do you tend to notice the thoughts the most or is it the way it feels in your body?

Tanbat: Yeah I can say like sometimes I feel uh the four things that you mentioned like my behaviour sometimes when I'm anxious my behaviour can change just drastically like I can I can do some weird things when I'm anxious

KA: Mm

Tanbat: So I think emotionally yeah getting as emotional with things and you know like don't have words again cannot talk to people just (.) eh want to lock yourself in a room and stay alone so I think it's it has been more of behaviourally and emotions

KA: Yeah yeah (.) so yeah just to ((stutters)) check that that it's mostly the behaviour and the emotions. And in terms of the emotions you're feeling is it you know could you describe them a bit? Is it mostly like worry or frustration or anger? What kind of emotions come to the surface for you when you're anxious?

Tanbat: OK when I'm anxious like sometimes I feel uh ((pause)) well I develop some anger like

KA: Mm

Tanbat: I'm angry ((inaudible)) at someone (.) maybe I feel like someone eh has caused me something to hap- caused something to happen. Urgh I'm just anxious but I develop that anger that like I don't want to talk to people like I feel like talking to someone will just anger me to people uh around people around my family maybe even my parents like you might find you don't want to talk to your parents. Ehh ((pause)) these are just some of the emotions that are among many others also

KA: Yeah. Well thank you so much for sharing that. Um ((pause)) and then just focusing on the (.) the body sensation stuff now because that's what we tend to look at for you know the work we do in our lab. So sometimes when people are anxious they can feel things like their heart beating really fast or they feel sick and shaky or that they can feel they start breathing a lot harder. Um can you ever feel any of these things when you're anxious?

Tanbat: Yeah some- like for the heart beating faster sometimes when I'm anxious like you may find my heart's like when you take your hand then you put it around your head (.) you just find your heart like beating so fast you're (.) it makes me sometimes afraid like am I am I going to have like a heart attack or what

KA: Yeah

Tanbat: because the heart beats like so fast sometimes ((inaudible)) I think I've experienced it. You may find your heart beating so yeah (.) sometimes it's scary because it may make you feel like you are you're having a problem with the heart or something

KA: Yeah so I imagine that's a bit like a big cycle then because probably you start to feel a bit anxious and then that makes your heart beat fast

Tanbat: Exactly

KA: And then that makes you feel even more anxious

Tanbat: Yeah

KA: Yeah yeah that's interesting. Um and what about some of the other things you feel in your body when you're anxious? Is it mainly just your heart beating or is there other stuff too?

Tanbat: Yes sometimes you can you can uh be shaky

KA: Yeah

Tanbat: Like you can (.) yeah you can sometimes be shaky like you cannot even hold something in your hand (.) because you are afraid like you will drop it or something you are shaking. So I think sometimes you can find a lil' shaky

KA: Yeah

Tanbat: You cannot even hold something in your hands

KA: Yeah definitely. I know I sometimes get similar when I'm anxious actually it's such a nasty feeling, isn't it? (.) Um (.) cool (.) and then this question is a little bit about the overlap between the autism and anxiety. So with some people I interview they say yes you know I have autism and I have anxiety and they're separate but for some people they think the two are really similar and they say you know the reason I'm anxious is because of my autism. So I just wondered if you had any thoughts about that? Does it does it feel like the two are separate for you or do you think that your autism causes your anxiety?

Tanbat: For me I think you can say (.) I say they're different uh

KA: Mm

Tanbat: Because sometimes (.) sometimes you may (.) you may be anxious even though you don't have autism

KA: Mm

Tanbat: So but for yeah but for me eh (.) for me I mainly think it's the autism that caused me to be anxious

KA: Yeah

Tanbat: So I think for some people they relate with for some for other people they're different like you may find people who may who might be anxious (.) who may be having these anxious difficulties but they don't have autism. But for me I think I can say autism is the one that causes me to be anxious so for me they are related

KA: Yeah yeah that's yeah you're definitely I think er right with that that for some people they might be different things but yeah maybe for you they do feel related. Could you maybe give me some examples about how sometimes you feel your autism can can lead to you feeling anxious?

Tanbat: Yes. So like when I'm in school oh because of my autistic like because I'm having autism

KA: Uh-huh

Tanbat: I find like that social uh social interaction with people (.) I may not like I may not be able to be (.) to make so many friends in school because of autism. Eh I may have difficulties like (.)

interacting with people so I think being not being able to interact and make friends in school caused me to be anxious because uh when you're not talking to people when you're like maybe you are just alone it may bring some anxiety to you

KA: Mm

Tanbat: uh because so I think (.) autism on the other side eh has contributed to anxiety. I think also er because of difficulties in explanations like sometimes maybe you may be explaining to someone and they're not understanding you or they're not getting you so it forces you to be like oh um maybe this person er (.) why is he not understanding me?

KA: Yeah

Tanbat: So I think (.) yes (.) it is also causes someone to be anxious like you may you may just become angry at someone because he's not understanding you

KA: Yeah I imagine that must be frustrating (.) um. Now something else that um some people who are autistic experience um but not everyone it's known as meltdowns. Um have you heard of the term meltdowns before?

((pause))

Tanbat: Sorry?

KA: Um yeah have you heard of the term meltdown before?

Tanbat: No

KA: No OK. It's something that some people um describe so specifically some autistic people describe and it's a feeling when everything gets a bit overwhelming and everything gets a bit too much and it can cause you to um (.) ac- it almost feels like everything is exploding so some people will shout or scream some people will cry or you know uh hit things um and it can look for people who are on the outside um you know like that person is having a very physical reaction. Um and I wondered, is that something that you've ever experienced before?

Tanbat: Like uh yeah like sometimes like I think I would experience it sometimes

KA: Mm

Tanbat: Like I feel overwhelmed (.) like uh ((pause)) although not so so much I think because I think my uh parents have been close to me. So I think if I feel overwhelmed or something is too much or maybe someone something has gone wrong in school my parents are in communication with my school the school administration and my parents communicate so I think uh when I feel overwhelmed too much the teachers talk to my parents. So I think it does not mean like too much for me feeling overwhelmed but uh maybe something too much uh has caused me to do something

KA: Mm

Tanbat: Out of anger (.) but yeah

KA: OK. Well that's and I'm really happy to hear that your parents are so supportive and that sounds like something that's been a real positive to you so that's really great. Um ((clears throat)) we're going to move a little bit away from the topic of anxiety now and talk about

something called alexithymia. Um and alexithymia is uh basically something that's separate to autism but we see it quite a lot in autistic people and it's when there's a difficulty identifying or describing emotions. So what that can look like is for some people they know they're feeling something really really intense but they can't work out if they're happy or if they're angry or if they're scared (.) um (.) they can just feel that there is an intense emotion but it's a bit tricky to workout exactly what that emotion is (.) um (.) so I just wondered is this something that you've ever experienced before?

Tanbat: ((pause)) yeah yeah

KA: Yeah?

Tanbat: I think (.) uh (.) I think I've experienced this before (.) er because (.) uh (.) like eh not being able not I mean like difficulties like expressing your emotions (.) er (.) sometimes (.) uh (.) sometimes I find that something has happened to me maybe some maybe someone has done something for you (.) maybe it may be a good thing or um a bad thing but let me take an example if someone has done something which he or she they think is a good thing to do

KA: Mm

Tanbat: But you for you think it is uh it is not a good thing. Like (.) one time my brother bought me some clothes so uh (.) these clothes he bought me some nice clothes very expensive clothes

KA: Mm

Tanbat: But oh so he expected me like to appreciate and say like you've done a good thing for me but then I didn't like these clothes because that type of clothes that I don't wear so (.) I it was not as not like amazing for me so I ended up not wearing this clothes totally. So my my brother was angry at me. He asked why I don't wear the clothes that he bought me but he had uh like he'd expected me like to be happy and (.) so I think ((pause)) that's one instance

KA: Mm yeah where you think some people expect you to feel a certain way and then and then you feel a very different way to that

Tanbat: Yeah

KA: ((clears throat)) Yeah that makes sense. Have there ever been times when you yourself are are not sure what you're thinking?

((pause))

Tanbat: Mm (.) yes yes (.) like ((audio disconnects))

KA: Oh sorry [REMOVED]. I think you've just your audio just cut off for a second there. Would you mind just saying something now so I can check see if it's working again?

Tanbat: Ok so hello

KA: Oh yeah you're back you're back ((laughs))

Tanbat: Ok so I was saying like sometimes I feel such intense emotions like then doubting what you are thinking like to ((pause)) You are thinking like if I make this is choice is it the right choice or not? OK uh it happens like many of the times like and so it's like of many choices to make like you don't know which one is the best for you. So I think for that one I think it

happens most of the time for me like don't know what to do you have like so many choices to make so it becomes hard like to choose the arrangement

KA: Mm yeah that sounds like it can be a bit overwhelming um. And let's take like (.) a couple of examples now. Um so say if you were feeling really really happy one day um would you know how that felt? Would you know that you were happy and not feeling another emotion like let's say (.) um scared or excited?

Tanbat: Sorry could you repeat that one a second-

KA: Yeah yeah so if you're feeling an emotion let's say you're feeling happy (.) um how would you know that you were feeling happy and not that you were feeling another emotion like let's say perhaps uh nervous. How would you be able to tell the difference between how those things felt to you?

Tanbat: Ah if I'm if I'm feeling happy I think (.) ah I think for me it's possible to tell if I'm feeling happy or I'm feeling nervous (.) uh (.) just for my (.) like when I'm feeling happy maybe something good has happened or someone has planned something (.) so uh (.) I think for me it's possible to tell like when I'm feeling happy and when I'm not feeling happy and when I'm feeling nervous

KA: Yeah and you say that that's because of the situation and things that go on you know how you'd feel in that situation?

Tanbat: Yeah. Yes because maybe situations have emotions with me or something that has happened. So I think it's good for me to tell if I'm feeling happy

KA: Mm ((pause)) Are there ome emotions where it's a bit harder to tell the difference between those emotions. Or do you think you're quite good at telling how you're feeling?

Tanbat: Ok ((pause)) ah yeah. I think it's ((pause)) it's not quite hard to tell uh what you're feeling er (.) for me I think it's not so hard like when I'm feeling happy or when I'm feeling sad it's quite possible for someone to tell or for me to know so I think it's not (.) not so hard to differentiate the emotions between

KA: Cool fantastic. I am so we're just around the halfway point of my questions now and I just wanted to check are you happy to keep going or would you like a little bit of a break?

Tanbat: No we can we can keep going

KA: Cool

Tanbat: so that we can finish by lunch

KA: ((laughs)) Yeah so my next questions are about interoception and that is our ability to feel signals that come from inside of our body. So some examples of that are how fast our heart is beating how hungry we are or how badly we need the bathroom. Um so to focus on the first one as an example which is our heart beating (.) now for some people they can feel their heart beating either in their chest or in their finger or somewhere like that. They can feel it all of the time (.) and for other people they can't always feel it but sometimes they feel it a bit more like if they're scared or if they've just done a lot of exercise. And for some people even if they've done exercise and they're anxious they still can't feel their heartbeat. Um so I wanted

to know what which of these applies to you can you always feel your heartbeat or only sometimes or never?

Tanbat: Yeah for me for me I think (.) uh (.) when I'm just sitting and relaxed it's um it's sometimes hard to like to feel it but when you're anxious or when you've done something like an activity or when you are feeling angry at someone

KA: Mm

Tanbat: it's quite possible to feel it. You can feel it like because if you just put your hand on your on your chest you can feel it

KA: Yeah yeah and uh so it's a lot of the time when we refer to interoception we mean that we don't even need to use our hands to feel it. But even if we weren't to touch our skin we can still feel the heart beating like inside of our chest. So would you say that that's still true that you know you sometimes feel even without touching anything you can still notice your heart is beating?

Tanbat: Mm ((pause)) for me I think it's ((pause)) uh OK. Sometimes you sometimes when you just relax not doing anything

KA: Mm

Tanbat: It's hard to feel it without touching so

KA: Right yeah

Tanbat: Yeah but when you maybe you've done an exercise or like you are you are you are angry or like you are anxious you can just feel it (.) even without touching my chest. So I think it depends on the situation

KA: Yeah. And what about now focusing on feelings of hunger do you often find it's easy for you to tell when you're hungry?

Tanbat: When I feel (.) um so (.) some days I think I cannot feel it because I can go like the whole day the whole day without eating anything at all and I'm feeling fine so

KA: Wow

Tanbat: Yeah so like there are some days like I don't really eat (.) but (.) there's some ((inaudible)) especially when uh I'm just at home like on weekends especially on weekends and some other days you cannot feel but when you're in school in a school uh because of the scheduling and you have other like students around so it's easy to feel it but when you're at home sometimes it's hard to like feel when you're hungry

KA: Yeah that's actually something that we see quite commonly with our participants that it's sometimes really hard to know if there aren't any clues from outside like other people eating it's hard to know exactly when you should be hungry um ((clears throat)) and I guess continuing on with this discussion about hunger um (.) what's your relationship like with food you know is it quite ((pause)) positive? Do you like food or do you not really like the experience of eating?

Tanbat: I my experience of food um (.) OK (.) I do um (.) uh (.) let me say let me just say like ((pause)) I don't like food too much like sometimes I can go without eating but ((inaudible)) so there are sometimes when my friends or my mama has given me too much food and then I was wondering like who's that food for

KA: Ah I'm really sorry. The audio went a bit funny again there could you just repeat what you said?

Tanbat: Yeah I said ay ((audio cuts out))

KA: Oh sorry

Tanbat: Hey

KA: Yeah Sorry I can I can hear you again now that's perfect yeah would you mind repeating what you said?

Tanbat: Yeah I was saying like (.) you had discussed my experience with food like if uh ((pause)) hope you are getting me

((pause))

Tanbat: Hello

KA: Hi sorry yeah I think that (.) I think that just cut out again umm ((pause)) let's try at (.) let's try again now. Hopefully it works if there's still an issue then perhaps we might need to leave and rejoin the call. But for now let's hope it's a bit better. Um so yeah you were saying that you sometimes you don't really like food is that correct?

Tanbat: Right yes yeah

KA: Yeah. And is it certain things about food like is it the texture of food or the taste of food? What is it about it that sometimes you don't like?

Tanbat: OK well it's sometimes like this it depends on the type of food

KA: Yeah

Tanbat: Like there's some kind of don't like again the way uh (.) um I don't like food with too many too much spices and too (.) too many things like just like plain (.) hi

KA: Yeah yeah yeah I can hear

Tanbat: Yeah like I don't like food with just too much spices and

KA: Mm

Tanbat: Uh and like maybe (.) sometimes I like food but not too much

KA: Yeah (.) OK

Tanbat: Yes

KA: So yeah it kind of depends on exactly what the food is um

Tanbat: Yeah

KA: And in terms of how much you eat do you think you eat a healthy amount of food a day or do you think that you eat a little bit too much or a little bit too little food?

Tanbat: Uh I think (.) I think I eat a healthy food just amount

KA: OK yeah

Tanbat: Yeah

KA: So you don't think (.) it's not like you have an eating disorder or anything like that. It's just that sometimes you might forget to eat and that there are certain foods you don't like eating?

Tanbat: Yeah I don't think I have an eating an eating disorder but sometimes like just be like you don't wanna eat but you don't like food. So I think it's just rare instances where I don't feel like eating but don't have any ah disorder

KA: Yeah OK great (.) um ((clears throat)) And we're going to talk a bit about some other bodily signals now. Um so this one might be a lil bit embarrassing but it's fine I talk to participants about this all the time um and that's knowing whether or not you need the bathroom um. So (.) do (.) is that something that you find quite easy to tell, or can it be quite difficult to know whether or not you need the bathroom sometimes?

Tanbat: Yeah I think it's quite easy to tell

KA: OK

Tanbat: Like

KA: Yeah

Tanbat: ((laughs)) I mean like I clean in the bathroom like (.) so that you keep clean and all that so I think it's quite easy to tell and it is like uh a big ((inaudible)) like you just need to take a shower like this

KA: Yeah yeah (.) and what about um you know to use the toilet um do you do you know you know do you know are you quite good at telling what it feels like when you when you need to use the toilet?

Tanbat: Uh yeah yeah

KA: Yeah ((pause)) also not a problem. Ok great. Um ((clears throat)) and (.) talking about all of these signals for a second, so the heartbeat using the toilet and eating all of these different sensations that come from inside of our body when you feel these (.) is it quite neutral or can those feelings be very positive or negative?

Tanbat: Yeah when I feel these uh er I think they're neutral they're not I say neutral

KA: Yeah yeah neutral OK yeah. But then I guess what you'd said earlier about maybe one of the exceptions of that might be if you feel your heart beating really fast right? And then that makes you a bit anxious

Tanbat: Yes yeah

KA: OK great fantastic. Um well that's actually (.) um (.) all of the questions I have for you for this interview um but what I wanted to do was give you the chance to discuss anything with

me that you think that maybe I haven't asked about but that maybe I should have asked about or anything like that. So is there anything that you think I've missed?

Tanbat: Um OK good I think you've covered so much I don't think there's something that you leave out

KA: Ok

Tanbat: Yeah

KA: Great great

Tanbat: You covered so much yeah

KA: ((laughs)) well thank you and thank you for talking to me about so much um ((pause)) great

Tanbat: Yeah

KA: So (.) again um thank you so so much for participating. This interview is going to really really help us in our research