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INYUVESI YASETHEKWINI YEZOBUCHWEPHESHE

Is social media spawning digital narcissism? A case study of KwaZulu-Natal digital millennials

by

Waheeda Peters

(19151423)

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Supervisor: Dr Surendra Thakur
Co-Supervisor: Bibi Ayesha Mall

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DECLARATION

I, Waheeda Peters, hereby declare that, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis, "Is social media spawning digital narcissism? A case study of KwaZulu-Natal digital millennials", represents my own work and has not been submitted previously for examination toward any degree or diploma qualification at any other University. All sources of information used are appropriately recognised in this study. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Durban University of Technology.

6 April 2022

_____   _____
Waheeda Peters   **Date**

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my father who never had the opportunity to study but worked extremely hard to put food on the family table. Sadly, he has been struck by the incurable Alzheimer's disease, and cannot recognise that I am his daughter anymore because of the scourge of this disease on his mind; however, I do know that he would be proud of his second, "delinquent" daughter, as he would say, for working hard and achieving this academic goal.

I would also like to thank my husband for his strength and dedication to me during this difficult time, and for also completing his Master's project recently. I am eternally grateful to my supervisor Dr Surendra Thakur, co-supervisor Bibi Ayesha Mall, as well as to Tarryn Frankish for their continued guidance and wisdom during this strenuous but exciting process, which resulted in the completion of this thesis.

Finally, I embarked on this study after observing how digitisation had impacted on the generation of millennials, including my three children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful completion of the research would not have been possible without the support, advice, assistance, and encouragement of others.

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for the guidance and for granting me the patience, determination, and strength to carry out this study and to my mother, children and siblings for their unconditional love and support.

I feel particularly indebted to my supervisor Dr Thakur whose endless guidance, encouragement patience, and support have been remarkable throughout this study. Thank you for believing in me. Thank you also to all millennials, parents of millennials, psychologists and celebrities who responded positively to my questionnaire and interview requests. Your participation was essential to the successful completion of this study.

ABSTRACT

In 2021, 60.71% of South Africans accessed the Internet, most of them doing so via mobile devices, and a growth to 67.8% is projected for 2026. Given KwaZulu-Natal's place in South Africa's socio-political and socioeconomic life, and considering the province's high population of young Internet-savvy people, it becomes pertinent to understand how the Internet, specifically social media usage, impacts on their propensity to slide, wittingly or unwittingly, into digital narcissism. The aim of the study was to explore social media usage amongst millennials of the Durban University of Technology, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal Province, to determine the potential impact of social media usage on digital narcissism.

For this qualitative study, the researcher adopted the behaviourist research paradigm, which is interpretive. An inductive research approach was followed, and two strategies were employed: *case study* and *survey*. The target population comprised four groups: (i) millennials of all races 18–34 years of age in the KwaZulu-Natal Province; (ii) parents of millennials; (iii) social media experts; and (iv) psychology experts using social media tools. Primary data were collected through interviews and secondary data were gathered from existing literature. The data were analysed using thematic analysis.

Through the lenses of each group of participants, five main themes were derived: (i) the *impact of digital technology* on millennials; (ii) *social media and Internet usage*; (iii) the *impact of social media* on millennials; (iv) the impact of *social influencers* on their followers; and (v) the *impact of Covid-19* on social media. Each of these five themes was sub-divided into sub-themes derived from the data analysis.

Through colour coding and key concepts/elements derived from findings in the literature review and from the themes/sub-themes that emerged during the data analysis of this study, a *Framework for Millennials and Parents on Social Media Usage and Possible Digital Narcissism Detection* is proposed to provide visual support to millennials and parents of millennials that enables them to detect potential social media usage problems and then self-correct.

Keywords: Addiction, social networking, narcissism, digital narcissism, personality, millennials

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2019/10/16	Narcissism thrives on the Net – take care	The Star	71692
2019/10/16	Narcissism thrives on the Net – take care	Daily News (Late Final)	22443
2019/10/17	Digital narcissism and the pressures of social media	Cape Times (First Edition)	29530
2019/10/17	Digital narcissism and the pressures of social media	Pretoria News	12579
2019/10/17	Digital narcissism and the pressures of social media	The Mercury (First Edition)	24464

readership = 190 269*5 = 951 345

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The Internet has significantly changed how humans live, work and relate to each other. Humans now operate and experience the world in ways that were unimaginable a few decades ago. According to Estrin, Govindan and Heidemann (2000), the pervasive nature of the Internet means that it can be a tool for whatever the user intends it to be. It is a proverbial double-edged sword capable of cutting or healing the individual and society (Bricout and Baker, 2010).

The availability of the Internet has enabled a concomitant growth in the use of social media sites where individuals communicate with friends or groups of acquaintances of their choice. Millennials, having grown up and spent most of their lives surrounded by digital tools, appear to be changing their way of thinking and they show, for example, a preference for an active rather than a passive way of learning (Sanchez, 2016).

With the rise in social media sites, individuals now potentially have multiple personalities split between the 'real' and 'virtual' world. As noted by Kittinaraporn (2018), the virtual world has provided so much solace for people seeking validation to the extent that many 'live' perpetually online, making the virtual their reality. With the possibility of garnering thousands and even millions of followers, there is often the tendency for people to have a false sense of importance. This could sometimes unwittingly lead to narcissism.

Although there are several polemics regarding an appropriate definition of narcissism, interest in the concept has existed for a long time. For example, as far back as 1898, Ellis (1898) defined the concept as excessive self-love with an inflated sense of self and self-entitlement, sometimes at the expense of debasing others. The definition has its root in the mythological figure of Narcissus, who, instead of accepting an approach by the nymph Echo, fell in love with his image that was reflected from a pond's surface.

In recent years, the concept has been associated with several scholars. For example, Miller et al. (2011) describe two distinct, but related forms of narcissism. They consider the sense of self-importance, uniqueness, dominance and overt grandiosity as grandiose narcissism. Interestingly, they also describe 'opposite' behaviours as narcissism. For example, they aver that when individuals exhibit insecurity, impersonal hypersensitivity and social withdrawal,

they are (un)wittingly being narcissistic. They term the behaviour as vulnerable narcissism (Miller et al., 2011).

Similarly, some scholars (Emmons, 1984; Morf and Rhodewalt, 2001) define narcissism beyond a mere grandiose feeling of self-love. They reckon that narcissism is a dimensional trait that not only consists of a grandiose self-concept, but also the behaviours intended to maintain this self-concept in the face of reality. In other words, in a bid to maintain a certain level of grandiose, narcissistic individuals often delve deeper into narcissism. Suffice to add that the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2013) distinguishes between narcissistic personality disorder and interconnected criterions. Narcissism occurs across the 'normal' (nonpathological) population and is associated with both positive (e.g., leadership and subjective wellbeing) and negative (aggression) behaviour (APA, 2013).

1.2   Background to the study

Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have become important parts of the lives of many people worldwide. Around two billion users were already active on Facebook by the end of 2016 (World Wide Worx, 2016). In total, 500 million users regularly post photos on Instagram (Newberry, 2019) and more than 300 million communicate via Twitter (Hutchinson, 2016).

Millennials aged 18–34 years (Cox, 2019) are said to be spending an excessive amount of time online, thereby becoming consumed by how their personalities are presented and how others respond to their presence through various social media platforms (Cox, 2019). Various studies conducted over the past years have investigated to what extent the use of social media is associated with narcissistic tendencies, with seemingly contradictory results. While some studies reported a positive relationship between the use of Facebook, Twitter and the likes, others observed only weak or even negative effects (Hegel, 2015).

1.3   Problem statement

In South Africa, 53.3% of South African households have at least one member who has access to the Internet either at their workplace, home, place of study or Internet cafés (Mzekandaba, 2016; Stats SA, 2016). This access, as well as the rise in the usage of mobile devices, allows more people globally to access online social media platforms, *inter alia* Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Myspace, Google+ and WhatsApp, through their computers or mobile phones, and the percentage of people who have access to the Internet and mobile phones increased significantly over the past two years in a survey of 40 countries (Stats SA, 2016).

Pew Research Centre (2016) also found that identified millennials, aged 18–34 years, shows higher usage of the Internet and smartphones compared to those 35 years and older. This increased usage of the Internet has raised concerns that excessive time spent online could lead to addictions and narcissism (Pew Research Centre, 2016; Gnambs and Appel, 2018). People with narcissism have exceedingly high regard of themselves, an amplified sense of worth, and they considering themselves superior to others and therefore more deserving of special treatment (Barlow and Durant, 2013: 466).

Firestone (2012) indicates that having an excessive interest in oneself appears to have become more prevalent amongst millennials in the Western world and in line with increased usage of social networking sites. Reinhard et al. (2012) maintain that individuals use these sites to enhance their careers. Others, however, are worried whether the psychological profile of millennial users and their frequent use of these sites can lead to narcissism in one instance, or whether it can become an artificial mood booster for those who have problems with self-esteem and social anxiety, on the other (Reinhard et al., 2012).

KwaZulu-Natal, the study's location, is South Africa's second largest province. With a population of 10.5 million, it accounts for nearly a fifth of the total number of people living in South Africa. The study is particularly significant because in 2021, 60.71% of South Africans accessed the Internet, most of them doing so via mobile devices, according to Ceci's (2021) Statistica report. Ceci (2021) projects a growth to 67.8% in 2026. As earlier stated, given KwaZulu-Natal's place in South Africa's socio-political and socioeconomic life, and considering the province's high population of young Internet-savvy people, it becomes pertinent to understand how the Internet, specifically social media usage, impacts on their propensity to slide, wittingly or unwittingly, into narcissism. These concerns have created the need for this study.

1.4   Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to explore social media utilisation amongst millennials of the Durban University of Technology, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal Province, to determine the potential impact of social media usage on digital narcissism. The research furthermore sought to determine whether the ubiquity of social media means that the millennial generation of techno-savvy Internet users is empowering changes to their sense of self.

1.5   Research questions

1.5.1   Primary research question (PRQ)

The primary research question is contained in the title of this study:

PRQ: Is social media spawning digital narcissism?

1.5.2   Sub-research questions (SRQs)

Four sub-research questions were formulated to address the primary research question:

SRQ1:   What are the implications of being a millennial in KZN where one grows with immersion in social media?

SRQ2:   Can millennials be classified as a narcissistic generation with traits of growing self-obsession?

SRQ3:   What are the risks related to narcissism in digital millennials' sense of self?

SRQ4:   What framework can be proposed that offers millennials insight into digital narcissism and guiding them on social media usage?

1.6   Research objectives

i)   To determine, from DUT millennials, the implication of being a millennial in Durban where one grows with immersions in social media.

ii)   To explore the narcissistic generation and the traits of growing self-obsession.

iii)   To identify the risk related to narcissism in the digital millennials' sense of self.

iv)   To propose a framework that offers millennials insight into digital narcissism and guiding them in social media usage.

1.7   Significance of the research

The study may contribute towards influencing the development of appropriate policies around the use and impact of social media by the public, but specifically by millennials in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. The research may also be of pragmatic contextual value to parents as the findings may offer insight into guiding millennials (pegged at age 18–34 years for this study) on social media use and for people in general to identify digital narcissism in terms of social media usage. Digital narcissism is rather difficult to determine or point out, because of its subjectivity. However, the goal of the study was to present certain character traits able to

act as pointers to narcissism so that individuals can understand when they are (sometimes unwittingly) sliding into narcissistic behaviour, especially on social media.

1.8   Scope and delimitations

The scope of the study was limited to the eThekwini Municipality, which includes the City of Durban, the commercial capital of the KwaZulu-Natal Province. The research excluded the youth below the age of 18, as it required careful study with the consent and presence of the necessary parents. This is flagged as important future work. Similarly, adults older than 34 years were excluded because this generation has an arguably mixed engagement with social media, with some active and others not. This is also flagged as important future work.

1.9   Research methodology

1.9.1   Research design

For this study, the Research Onion design of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2018) was adopted, with the research approach being inductive, the methodological choice being qualitative research, and research strategy being a survey conducted within a case study context. The aim was to explore the impact social media has on millennials and its possible links to narcissism, social anxiety, and other psychological problems in Durban.

1.9.2   Data collection

The research data were collected using four semi-structured interview schedules (also called guides) for four sample groups respectively, containing open-ended questions based on the research objectives. The data were captured using an audio recorder and written notes, which were transcribed for data analysis purposes (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

The target population comprised four groups: (i) millennials of all races 18–34 years of age in the KwaZulu-Natal Province who have been on social media platforms such as Facebook for more than two years, and who have more than 300 friends online; (ii) parents of millennials; (iii) social media experts; and (iv) psychology experts using social media tools (with the criteria of having more than 500 friends and several years' online presence.

The sample size determination is generally made by subjective judgment, which seemed appropriate for this qualitative study. Table 1.1 presents the sample size of each of the four participant categories.

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Table 1.1: Sample size of participant categories

Participant categories	Sample size	Justification
Millennials	6-8	Seems reasonable for this specific topic
Parents of millennials	6	Seems reasonable for this specific topic
Local celebrities/social media experts who embrace social media	6	Seems reasonable for this specific topic
Educational and clinical psychologists	6	Seems reasonable for this specific topic

1.9.2.1 *How each group of participants was selected and approached*

Millennials: Students of Durban University of Technology (DUT) were invited to participate in the project via a notification on the DUT student portal. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted via telephonic and electronic means rather than the face-to-face method.

Parents of millennials: These participants were not attached to the millennials who took part in the study for ethical reasons. They were invited to participate in the study through online requests on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The interviews were conducted telephonically at the participants' convenience.

Local celebrities/social media experts who embrace social media: They were invited to participate in the study through online requests on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The interviews were conducted telephonically and via electronic media at the participants' convenience.

Educational and clinical psychologists: These participants were sought through medical directories and contacted directly for potential participation in the study. The interviews were conducted telephonically and via electronic media at the participants' convenience.

Length of each interview: 45 minutes

Probing questions: Yes, but the questions were limited to online behaviour such as frequency of usage and main reasons for usage.

1.9.3 Data analysis

The data were collected to explore the usage of technology by this millennial generation and to help the researcher understand, through drawing findings, how narcissism may affect the

identity and emotional problems of these millennials in the digital age, and, if so, what recommendations can be made to curb this. The collected data were analysed thematically as it is the most appropriate method to directly analyse data in a qualitative study. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this method entails working through the interview transcripts to identify patterns and derive themes. To ensure data triangulation, the researcher compared the feedback received with available literature in the field.

1.9.4   Research ethics

The researcher has been well aware of the need to regard the idea of human rights, pride and security of members during and after this research. There are two critical concepts for ethical consideration: autonomy and non-maleficence. First, to ensure autonomy, all sensitive topics were treated with respect even though it could have been a useful contribution to the study. Second, to guarantee non-maleficence, the privacy and confidentiality of documents, or rather, the use of the questionnaire without knowing the identity of the people who participated in the interviews (remaining anonymous and being sensitive to human dignity) was ensured. Gatekeeper's letters were attained to prove the researcher's permission to conduct the study and to gain access to the school premises and community halls.

1.10 Chapter outline

The research is presented in six chapters, as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter offers a brief synopsis of the present situation in South Africa relating to social media and digital narcissism. The researcher sought to determine whether social media or digital technology has detrimentally affected KwaZulu-Natal Province millennials' interpersonal and communication skills from a psychological, social, and scholastic perspective.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter illustrates and provides information on the effects of various social media on millennials. The review includes international research that investigated whether a relationship exists between social media relationships in terms of social anxiety, self-esteem, narcissism, and social networking sites usage, and whether social media reflects or amplifies narcissism. The chapter concludes by looking at how different types of social media have impacted on millennials in terms of digital narcissism.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter, the research design is explained. The researcher adopted a qualitative research methodology. Primary data were collected through interviews and secondary data were gathered from existing literature. The chapter concludes with an indication of the research ethics that were adhered to.

Chapter Four: Findings and Interpretation of Results

The researcher presented the study's results in this chapter. Interview data were analysed and backed up with relevant literature. The researcher presented the findings in ways that provided answers to the research questions of the study.

Chapter Five: Proposed Framework for Social Media Usage and Possible Digital Narcissism Detection

A framework that may contribute towards mitigating the negative effects of millennials' extraordinary amount of time and usage of social media platforms is proposed by the researcher.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, conclusions and recommendations are made along with potential areas for future research, thereby highlighting the importance of the subject under study.

1.11 Summary

The chapter presented a brief introduction and background of the study. The researcher provided the study's aim, objectives, and research questions. A summary of the research methodology adopted for the study was presented. The next chapter (Two) provides insight, through a review of literature, into the knowledge and research conducted by other scholars on social media use and digital narcissism.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Psychologists Markus and Nurius (1987) claim that a person has two selves: the "now self" and the "possible self". It is unlikely that they anticipated the Internet enabling a person to approximate their "possible self" or present a version of them that is closer to it. Regarding studies of online narcissism, the discussion is dominated by social media. Mehdizadeh (2010: 358) suggests that the possible self "is most pronounced in anonymous online worlds, where accountability is lacking, and the 'true' self can come out of hiding". However, non-anonymous public platforms such as Facebook provide an opportune environment for the expression of this 'hoped-for possible self' (Beck, 2014).

The advent of mobile and digital technologies led to large scale engagements and interaction becoming easier and simpler for users than ever before. These technologies have, as such, begat a new media era where interactivity is positioned at the centre of new media functions. Indeed, Brown, Halpern and L'Engle (2015) assert that the use of new media made it possible for individuals to communicate to many and receive instant feedback. Whereas the voices of consumers and citizens were somewhat muted and limited before, they now have the possibility of sharing opinions with many (Pirelli, Otto and Estoup, 2016). Friedman (2015: 8) reminds that "the world is flat". In his opinion, the flattening is a product of the convergence of the personal computer and fibre optic micro cable with the rise of workflow software. Friedman termed the period globalisation 3.0, thereby differentiating it from the previous globalisation 1.0 (1491–1800), during which countries and governments were the main protagonists, and from globalisation 2.0 (1800–2000), during which multinational companies led the way in driving global integration.

Pantic (2014) asserts that the increasingly lower cost of accessing new technology has enabled more options for users to consume media than ever before. Therefore, instead of having only a few news outlets, individuals are now empowered and enabled to find information from various sources and communicate with others by visiting message forums. Social media form the centre of this ongoing revolution.

The researcher's focus for this literature review is on the evolution of social media, its growth and overwhelming impact on society in general and human interactions specifically. The researcher delves further into the term *narcissism*, vis-à-vis its types and characteristics.

2.2 Origin and evolution of social media

Rapid changes in technology began in the 20th Century. After the first then called super-computers were created in the 1940s, scientists and engineers began developing ways to create networks between those computers, which later led to the birth of the Internet. Pirelli, Otto and Estoup (2016) contend that the original forms of the Internet commonly known as CompuServe were developed in the 1960s. Fox and Rooney (2015) further state that nascent forms of the email were similarly developed during this time and improved during the 1970s. Networking technology had improved gradually, which enabled users to utilise Usenet to communicate through a virtual newsletter.

Equally important, premised on the ongoing discussion on the origination and evolution of social media, Reinhard et al. (2012) maintain that by the 1980s, home computers, or the so-called personal computer (PC) were acknowledged. Social media became sophisticated with Internet relay chats, or IRCs, used in 1988 and continued this popularity well into the 1990s. Carpenter (2012) informs that the first recognisable social media site called Six Degrees, created in 1997, enabled users to upload a profile and make friends with other users, and in 1999, the first blogging sites equally became popular, creating a social media sensation that is still popular today.

Kauten and Barry (2014) suggest that pursuant to the invention of blogging, social media became popular and consequently, sites such as MySpace and LinkedIn gained prominence in the early 2000s. Other sites such as Photobucket, Flickr and latterly Instagram facilitated online photo sharing. YouTube arose in 2005, which literally created an entirely new way for people to communicate and share across great distances (Kauten and Barry, 2014). TikTok (2019)[1] has since even modernised this service.

Facebook and Twitter both became available to users throughout the world by 2006. Goodboy and Martin (2015) aver that these sites are the most popular social networks on the Internet as others such as Tumblr, Spotify, Foursquare and Pinterest started to fill specific social networking niches. There exists a wide variety of social networking sites that can be linked to allow cross-posting. Thus, Carpenter (2012) contends that in this regard, there is the

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[1] TikTok is an addictive video-sharing social networking service owned by the Chinese company named ByteDance (TikTok, 2016).

possibility of having an environment wherein users can reach the maximum number of people without sacrificing the intimacy of person-to-person communication.

Premised on the ongoing assertion, there is speculation on what the future of social networking, powered by the Internet, may look in the next decade or even 100 years from now, but it seems clear that it will exist in some albeit evolved form for as long as humans exist. Fox and Rooney (2015) opine that the internet has been in existence since 1988 and has always been used by people to retrieve or search for information from a 'never-ending' online library and for commercial purposes (Sadleir and De Beer, 2015).

Moreover, the Internet has also evolved into an online social networking platform. Internet-based social networking sites allow individuals the freedom to communicate personal information or causes to other individuals or groups of people they may choose to become part of their online networks (Sadleir and De Beer, 2015). However, this increased usage of the Internet has raised concerns that it could lead to addictions (Pew Research Center, 2016) and social disorders, such as narcissism. The overload and compression of social networking sites together with the influx of blogging into the online social media milieu raises questions as to the behavioural patterns of human beings thriving in a "me first" forum (Pew Research Center, 2016: 78). That mentality seems to follow similar patterns with the mental disorder known as narcissism (Pew Research Center, 2016).

In the past years, narcissism has been increasingly discussed and analysed in the field of psychology. Narcissism however was not formally classified and recognised as an official disorder until the American Psychiatric Association[2] (APA) introduced this term into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manuals of Disorders (DSM-III) in 1980. The APA is the main professional organisation of psychiatrists.

2.3   Conceptualising narcissism

Narcissism is a personality disorder wherein an individual feels an extremely elevated sense of self-worth (Pirelli, Otto and Estoup, 2016). Livingstone (2008) adds that a narcissist always insists on being first in line to grab opportunities to gain more fame and admiration and suggests that a narcissistic individual always thinks that no one else is special or unique in every single way more than them. Alluding to this fact, Pantic (2014) proffers that narcissists believe in being superior more than anything else and more than anyone else, while the Pew

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[2] https://www.psychiatry.org

Research Center (2016) asserts that the mindset of a narcissist is premised on uniqueness and that everyone is bound to give their attention to them from time to time.

In their description of a narcissist individual, Meier and Gray (2014) avert that a narcissist believes he/she was born to be treated in an extra special manner. To have a better understanding of narcissism, Kauten and Barry (2014) suggest that narcissism is a psychological disorder that is gradually developed over time through the involvement of biological and environmental factors. Studies conducted by Fox and Rooney (2015) revealed that narcissism is perceived to be genetic and consequently children who have narcissistic parents are more likely to develop Narcissism, hence making it a natural and heritable character trait.

Narcissism, or "Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)", is a very real mental health challenge; sufferers continuously crave admiration, and they struggle to empathise, relate to or care about other people (Pantic, 2014). Pantic (2014) posits that people with NPD have a strong sense of self-importance and being special, and this "specialness" is only perceived by peers. Meier and Gray (2014) opine that although narcissist feels superior to others, the chance of being incredibly sensitive to criticism is high.

Furthermore, Wright et al. (2017) suggest that NPD displays a pattern of self-centred, arrogant behaviour and thinking, a disproportionate need to be admired, and a lack of consideration and empathy for other people. People frequently describe individuals with NPD as self-centred, arrogant, patronising, insistent, and manipulative. This type of behaviour and manner of thinking appears in every aspect of the life of a narcissist: in love relationships, the working environment, with family members, and in friendships, to name a few.

As indicated by Gabbard and Crisp-Han (2016), in C. Lasch's (1980) book of the culture of narcissism, the term narcissism was a clinical entity as well as a way of symbolising cultural movements in the 1970s. It showcased a culture of singularity in the 1970s wherein the growing role of the media promoted a lack of substance and depth in the culture. However, taking into consideration the view of Pantic (2014), another cultural emergent has begun, which allows for regular and constant interaction with technology and social media, and impacts on the cultural perception of self. This cultural emergence is concerned with the millennial generation now living in a visible, constantly connected technological public space.

Fox and Rooney (2015) highlight new trends on how the smartphone generation, which is a population of people who are losing the art of human communication especially with the emergence of a deep-seated new self, is being shaped by what they want others to perceive. Therefore, the need for praise and increased self-esteem can now happen in seconds just by pressing 'send' on the mobile phone or posting a "selfie" on social media. This theme will be further explored in section 2.10.

2.3.1 Social media platforms matter to the narcissist

A revealing study by Davenport et al. (2014) has found that:

i) Narcissistic motives mediate the relationship between narcissism and active social media usage.

ii) Tweeting is the preferred method of active college age narcissists.

iii) There is no relationship between active Facebook usage and narcissism in the college sample.

This shows that at college level students who are perceived narcissists do make a choice on the platform. This research feels obligated to point out that although social media is an obvious location for narcissism, online role-playing games such as World of Warcraft, also show attraction to the narcissist. A study conducted with 1,471 Korean online gamers showed narcissists to be more likely addicted to the games than non-narcissists. The concrete goals and rewards the games afford players increased prestige, power, and status (Beck, 2014; Kim et al., 2008).

2.4 Narcissism origins and evolution into the modern world

Narcissism originated from the lingual origins of the Greek myth of Narcissus. It is frequently discussed in clinical psychology and is equally referred to as a disorder aligned with narcissistic personality disorder (Pirelli, Otto and Estoup, 2016). According to Meier and Gray (2014), narcissism has been around since the time of Ovid more than 2000 years ago and the concept has long been a source of study, intrigue, fascination, and literature, both within and beyond the psychoanalytic community.

While narcissistic personality remains a severe and rare clinically diagnosed condition, sub-clinical narcissism or narcissistic traits have reached epidemic proportions with serious consequences. Livingstone (2014) posits that ever-increasing levels of greed, self-obsession, superficial relationships, arrogance, and vanity are ubiquitously apparent and do not make

individuals any happier, with common mental health problems on the increase, especially amongst the young.

Kauten and Barry (2014) point to seemingly irreversible alterations to family life by technological development such as social media, attitudes to death and dying, and celebrity worship, all featuring in the rise of our narcissistic society, and all being interconnected trends. Goodboy and Martin (2015) warn that group, greed, and grandiosity through the lens of narcissism are perhaps the most sinister of all attitudes.

This literature review concerning narcissism aims to consider the impact of social media, which have brought about a huge rise in both individual and group egotism.

2.5 Drivers and causation of narcissism

According to Pirelli, Otto and Estoup (2016), the term narcissism was first used in Psychology in 1898 by Havelock Ellis who discussed it as a deep absorption, bordering on obsession, with self-admiration. Pantic (2014) offers insight into the narcissism by asserting that as a disorder, narcissism is prompted by the need for an individual to satisfy the following: grandiose sense of self-importance, living in a fantasy world that supports delusional of grandeur.

2.5.1 Grandiose sense of self-importance

Brummelman et al. (2015) maintain in their research that grandiosity is concerned with defining the characteristics of narcissism. Pirelli, Otto and Estoup (2016) posit that grandiosity is much more than mere vanity and arrogance; it is an impracticable feeling of being superior, which makes narcissists believe in superiority and uniqueness or "specialness" that is only understood by others who are special. A sense of grandiose self-importance creates the impression for narcissists that "they are too good" for anything that is "average or ordinary", especially in having the thought that they only have a relationship with persons of higher status (Meier and Gray, 2014: 45). Carpenter (2012: 34) contends that narcissists equally believe in superiority, especially that they are "better than everyone else and expect recognition" for nothing done on their part to earn it. In addition, Goodboy and Martin (2015: 67) posit that a narcissist will often exaggerate their achievements and talents and "how great they are, and how lucky the people in their lives are to have them". Narcissists perceive themselves as the undeniable icon, while everyone else is merely a player at best (Pantic, 2014).

2.5.2 Living in a fantasy world that supports delusions of grandeur

The grandiose perception narcissists have of themselves is not supported by real-life. This world of fantasy narcissists live in is reinforced falsehood, an enchanted mindset, and self-deception (Pirelli, Otto and Estoup, 2016). Generally, a narcissist has "self-glorifying fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, attractiveness, and ideal love that make them feel special and in control" (Kauten and Barry, 2014: 78). The authors further indicate that these fantasies protect narcissists from feelings of inner emptiness and shame, so facts and opinions that contradict them are ignored or rationalised away.

> "Anything that threatens to burst the fantasy bubble is met with extreme defensiveness and even rage, so those around the narcissist learn to tread carefully around their denial of reality" (Fox and Rooney, 2015: 90).

2.5.3 Need for constant praise and admiration

Aligned to the discussion on reasons that drive narcissism, a narcissist's sense of superiority is inconsistent and decreases steadily, and to maintain this sense magnificence, they need continuous acknowledgement and praises, since occasional appreciation is completely insufficient to them (Pantic, 2014).

Narcissists need their ego boosted constantly; they therefore feel driven to encircle themselves with persons who are prepared to gratify their compulsive thirst for admiration (Wright et al., 2017). "These relationships are very one-sided. It's all about what the admirer can do for the narcissist, never the other way around. And if there is ever an interruption or diminishment in the admirer's attention and praise, the narcissist treats it as a betrayal" (Smith and Robinson, 2020: 1).

Meier and Gray (2014) caution that since narcissists consider themselves special, they expect favourable treatment as their right, because they believe that whatever they want, they should get. Equally important, narcissists expect others to automatically attend to their every wish and command (Carpenter, 2012). Meier and Gray (2014) assert that the known anticipation to meet every need of a narcissist creates the need for value. Anyone who dares requesting something in return or challenges the narcissist's desires is perceived as being selfish, which invokes only ire, anger, or even a cold shoulder (Fox and Rooney, 2015).

2.5.4 Exploitation without guilt or shame

Individuals with the intent to identify with the emotions and feelings of others whilst displaying no compassion for their regard are highly compatible with the traits of narcissism

(Meier and Gray, 2014). In this respect, upon developing narcissism, individuals end up viewing the people in their lives as objects to serve their own needs. Therefore, a narcissist has no problem with taking advantage of others to realise their own desires. These actions may well be malevolent, but many times narcissists are merely insensitive and unaffected by their own behaviour and the effect it has on others (Pantic, 2014).

2.6   The impact of social media on narcissism

According to Carpenter (2012), research studies established that there has been a disproportionate use of social media; specifically, the posting of images and selfies is associated with a subsequent increase in narcissism. Pirelli, Otto and Estoup (2016) studied personality changes in 74 individuals aged 18–34 years over four months, assessing the participants' usage of social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat during that same period. The findings revealed that participants' excessive use of social media through visual postings displayed an average increase of 25% in such narcissistic traits over the four months of the study. This increase took many of these participants above the clinical cut-off for NPD, based on the measurement scale used.

However, it now seems that technologies such as mobile phones, software and social networks may be impeding the natural process of growing up, of learning to evolve beyond adolescent narcissism. It may cause us to live in a self-centred social environment devoid of non-peers and personal criticism. Furthermore, mobile phones enable teens to maintain continuous contact with peers and block out communication with non-peers, such as older adults and younger children. This may lead to further isolation of the youth from others and obstructing the progression of acquiring healthy compassion and a sense of connection with the broader population (Kauten and Barry, 2014).

Carpenter (2012) also states that social networks are anti-social. Furthermore, Pirelli, Otto and Estoup (2016) maintain that the main benefit of social networks is to control and limit interactions. In continuation, Fox and Rooney (2015) suggest that numerous web sites, from the news to YouTube, serve as enablers for users to socialise with co-users and post comments of any type or form. Furthermore, social platforms allow others to form private and self-centred groups. In this sense, new technologies indeed enhance narcissism. Young people also seem to display more narcissistic behaviour than people who are older, as the youth grew up with access to technology (Meier and Gray, 2014).

This statement might be true, narcissism has always been more prevalent amongst the youth, but recent research points to the likelihood that college students seem to become increasingly narcissistic each year, and this has been the case since at least 1982 (Fulton, Marcus and Zeigler-Hill, 2014).

2.6.1 Too narcissistic for Twitter

In general, and surprisingly so, young people are inclined to like Facebook but dislike Twitter (Brown, Halpern and L'Engle, 2015). This apathy towards Twitter may be attributed to: (i) Twitter's features being limited; (ii) too few people visiting their online profile; and (iii) insufficient security (Goodboy and Martin, 2015). Furthermore, according to Kauten and Barry (2014), the primary reason for the youth's tendency to be "too narcissistic" for Twitter is that as a social media platform, this service is full of people that boast self-importance and broadcast insignificant personal happenings.

Fulton, Marcus, and Zeigler-Hill (2014) assert that the narcissist lacks empathy for others and is overly sensitive to criticism. Therefore, Twitter is a narcissist's nightmare because strangers and the public potentially read posts and even comment on them in public. To narcissists, non-peer groups are of no consequence and exist only as some irrelevant abstraction. Therefore, broadcasting tweets are not interesting, and being criticised in public is terrifying. To better understand the impact of Twitter or its usage in driving an individual, Ridgway and Clayton (2017) state that no other president has so thoroughly dominated the press as Trump managed to do, largely because of his extremely active posting habits and his bombastic writing traits.

Ridgway and Clayton (2017) suggest that Trump's presence as the first Twitter-based Presidency is no fluke. His social media presence is intentional and strategic; his posts—while individually senseless — are collectively incredibly shareable. This is what matters in politics in the Internet era — a candidate's ability to enter the household through televisions, computers, mobile phones, and more. While it is difficult to view Trump as successful in the political realms which traditionally have shaped the presidency, his unrelenting success is owed largely to his ability to navigate the modern globalised world. However, as the rest of his presidency develops, at least one aspect will remain constant: Trump's active online presence is not only definitive of his presidency, but no doubt will shape and inspire all subsequent national elections for as long as social media can reign supreme.

2.6.2 Facebook

Carpenter (2012) asserts that Facebook is a narcissist's dream where individuals can limitlessly post pictures of and talk about themselves. Social-networking sites in general and Facebook in particular have been described as havens for narcissists. Kauten and Barry (2014) state that generally, platforms such as Facebook are ideally suited to narcissists, because users are invited to discuss themselves, no matter how trivial the detail of everyday living is, and to attract attention from social networks in the form of likes and comments. Brown, Halpern and L'Engle (2015) however caution that narcissists have the time of their lives on Facebook. Studies by Livingstone (2008) confirm that narcissists spend indeed more time on Facebook than non-narcissists and they engage in a great deal of self-promotion online, intending to shine a spotlight on themselves and attract admiration.

2.6.3 Instagram

Instagram is an increasingly popular social networking site amongst young people, as it allows the sharing of photos and videos. Users are encouraged to amend photos by making use of available special effects and filters that can be applied easily before they upload it to the Instagram site. Instagram focuses primarily on images, and this differentiates it from Twitter and Facebook. A total of approximately 300 million people use Instagram regularly, as indicated by Instagram Press. On average, 70 million images (or photos) are posted daily on the site globally, which attract 2.5 billion "likes". Notwithstanding these enormous numbers, not much research on Instagram and how it relates to narcissism has been published. Paramboukis, Skues and Wise (2016) maintain that Instagram's focus on photos may facilitate narcissistic behaviour, for example pretence and validation seeking.

> "Instagram facilitates the selection and editing of photos that can be used to make a specific impression to others by glamorising the portrayal of themselves or their lives. This type of behaviour aligns with grandiose narcissism traits such as attention-seeking, vanity, self-promotion, and exhibitionism" (Paramboukis, Skues and Wise, 2016: online).

Instagram offers functions such as *like* and *comment* to followers. Using these functions does not require followers to have 'a deeper relationship' with Instagram, thus making this concept to strongly appeal to followers. Another method that appeals to narcissistic individuals is the use of "hash tagging (#)". Users have the option to "hash tag" their pictures (photos) with well-liked search terms, leading to the probability that larger audiences will easily notice their pictures.

2.7 Social media influencing

Influencers on social media platforms are perceived as third-party endorsers who function independently. They shape and form the mindset and feelings of their followers through tweeting and blogging (Van Ouytsel et al., 2015). These influencers generate content and endorse specific brands through sites like Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. The content continuously brings in more followers. Elliotton (2018) defines influencers as people who succeeded in finding popularity in the online space and who have gathered large numbers of followers, for example, models on Instagram, entrepreneurs on Facebook, and entertainers on YouTube.

In the past, influencers were mostly famous superstars, but with the increasing availability and advancement of digital technologies, the opportunity arose for others to follow suit by connecting with specific brands in their own creative ways—a concept called "media fragmentation". These newly emerged influencers are categorised into four groups: brand influencers, micro-influencers, influencers, and celebrities.

> "Brand influencers are ordinary people who are active in a brand's social media communities, who unknowingly carry the velocity and impact of conversation. Their natural passion for the brand or topic draws attention from others and their influence grows depending on their activity" (Wagner, Aguirre and Sumner, 2016: 45).

Brand influencers usually have "several hundred" devoted, trustworthy, and dedicated followers. Generally, micro-influencers may have anything from 5,000 to 50,000 followers. "Influencers and celebrities usually have millions of followers on various platforms, with celebrities generally commanding the biggest follower numbers because of their mainstream prominence" (Weiser, 2015: 45). It might be true that many influencers do not hold professional jobs, but when they have announcements to make or comments to post, their followers listen. South Africa lacks media diversity: in other words, the country does not have as many social platforms compared to some other countries. At first it may look like a disadvantage, but it is in fact this aspect that increases the demand for quality content. Personalities such as Suzelle DIY have amassed almost cult followings by providing online entertainment and content that is functional, interesting, and humoristic, with cross-over appeal. Micro-influencers usually display expertise in a specific niche area; they do not have a huge reach, but their distinct knowledge draws loyal followers.

Celebrities can be seen as the initial influencers that were first on the scene—primarily film stars, sport stars and pop stars/musicians. They would have been the advocates for big brand clothing (such as jeans), soft drinks (such as Coca-Cola), and automobiles in the early 20th century. All that is different now is their access to multiple digital media, which gives them more flexibility in how they communicate with their followers. While an influencer advertisement might be hidden by "ad blockers" or bypassed by personal video recorders (PVRs), a well-placed branded Instagram post by universal celebrities such as Bonang Matheba or Casper Nyovest reaches the audience unfettered.

Media influencers' success is crucial for brands; as such, technology is used to recognise and trace an influencer's importance to a business or brand (Ledbetter et al., 2011). This technology traces the number of (i) comments and likes received; (ii) followers; (iii) hits on a blog; and (iv) times a blog is shared. These aspects are fundamental to the success and fame of online influencers (Chan and Tsang, 2011). Influencer marketing on social media platforms has opened a new means for brands to connect with and draw the interest of consumers in a more direct manner (Adweek, 2015). Social media influencers endorse brands through their personal lives, thereby "advertising" these brands in a way that consumers identify more with the product.

Ledbetter et al. (2011) opine that when a party attempts to influence another in terms of taking specific actions, a dynamic ensues that can change the course and content of their relationship. Furthermore, influencers truly serve as the ultimate connection between a brand and a consumer (Chan and Tsang, 2011). Through their candidness and openness with consumers, influencers have high social clout and credibility (Buyer, 2016), which is what makes the phenomenon so successful. Where traditional marketing targeted mostly mass audiences, influencers have the unique ability to target niche audiences that have until now been unreachable (Peter and Valkenburg, 2014a).

In continuing with the debate on social media and narcissism, it is fair to state that social media do not only necessary negate negativity, but it can also offer positivity. This can be viewed through the lens of Kim Kardashian, who has 84 million followers on Instagram, 48 million on Twitter and is a walking, pouting product placement vehicle. She is obsessed with social media, and this allows her fans to keep track of her every movement, which may have helped the masked gang that ransacked her luxury Paris apartment (Pearson, 2016; France and Verdier, 2016). Kardashian can command six-figure payments just for making an appearance. She has enjoyed many endorsement deals, from Carl Jr.'s to weight-loss pills, Charmin public

restrooms, $25 lollipops, and even Midori liqueur despite the fact she says she does not drink. (Ironically, she still had to step down from the gig when she got pregnant). The mom works in fashion, fragrance, make-up, and retail, and has started a fashion boutique with her sisters. A most modern, multimedia, and social media celebrity, she has even cashed in on a hit video game, *Kim Kardashian: Hollywood*, and a book of selfies entitled *Selfish*.

In addition to Kim Kardashian, De Aguiar Pereira (2016) posits that Bonang Matheba, a South African social media influencer, won an Inspiration and Influence award because of her presence on social media. Known for her work ethic, determination, and generosity, Dosekun (2015) affirms that South African multi-award-winning radio host, TV presenter and MC, Global Citizen ambassador and style icon, Bonang Matheba, affectionately referred to by fans as Queen B, has firmly positioned herself as Africa's most sought-after entertainment personality and South Africa's number one social media darling. Bonang is the personification of an African success story and went global in 2019. With over 7 million combined social media followers, Bonang won the coveted Award for Best Inspiration and Influence at the prestigious Global Social Awards held in Prague, Czech Republic, in May 2019. This "Queen B" of South Africa is just getting started. The year 2020 saw Matheba launch her own luxury beverage with the introduction of the HOUSE OF BNG, while the documentary "Public Figure", which Matheba starred in and co-produced, received a nomination in the Manchester Film Awards, while the third season of her reality show "Being Bonang" was aired since July 2019 on 1 Magic channel. From a very young age, Matheba knew that she wanted to be great, and following endless hours of building her brand, she got her break as presenter of LIVE.

2.8   Healthy narcissism and social media

Social media is oftentimes viewed by the commercial media as promoting self-consumed individuals and organisations. When used the wrong way, social media can help users, especially narcissists (Bazarova et al., 2013). Narcissists have the perception that "the world revolves around them", they are therefore paranoid, hyper-alert and take everything personally (Weiser, 2015: 45).

An example of healthy narcissism in line with social media usage is that narcissists "achieve" their reputation by consistently turning the focus on themselves and their influence on others. The healthy version is focusing on the sense of putting their head down and running their own life based on values and having a healthy vision of a life filled with their passions, priorities, goals. In this scenario, Ridgway and Clayton (2017) assert that a narcissist will decide on the kind of person they want to be. Furthermore, narcissists only enjoy people who see them the

way they see themselves, and when people give them the attention and praise, they feel deserving. This means narcissists do not really enjoy others unless they are validated by an experience or occasion (Bazarova et al., 2013).

Another version of social media and narcissism, according to Weiser (2015), is that while narcissists may be at the extreme end of self-centredness, there are those at the opposite end, who are inert or who walk on eggshells. "They are afraid of confrontation, afraid to define and state their needs and wants, and so they live their lives, paradoxically like narcissists, shaped by others" (Weiser, 2015: 45). McCain and Campbell (2018: 56) assert that the healthy antidote to the narcissistic side of this equation is to drop the manipulation and even expectations, and instead allow yourself to appreciate the person you are talking to for who she is or they are, here and now, without thinking ahead to, "how can I steer this conversation towards me?" For those who walk on eggshells, the healthy approach is to step-up and be assertive about their needs and wants as a narcissist.

Narcissists rarely take responsibility for their behaviours, but instead push back and deflect, blame others (Wright et al., 2017). The healthy approach is one where a narcissist accepts responsibility for his/her decisions and actions, where they do not see themselves as perpetual victims, where they apologise when they inadvertently hurt someone's feelings. But as stated in the preceding assertions, it does not mean that when a narcissist goes to the opposite end of the pole and grovels to others, everything is their fault. Instead, a narcissist should reach the middle ground of admitting mistakes but holding firm to what is important to them (McCain and Campbell, 2018).

2.9   The mobile phone wars

Premised on the preceding discussion, Carpenter (2012) contends that the prospect of narcissism having a showground in the form of mobile phones is not just about teenagers, but also about adults. Brummelman et al. (2015) state that the scenario whereby individuals seemingly over-use their mobile phones for self-glorification in public is a daily one and this is narcissism made real. Pantic (2014) asserts that scenes of using a mobile phone in a public place combine self-absorption with disregard for others. Before mobile phones, users were forced to interact with and have some consideration for non-users in the room (Carpenter, 2012). However, the mobile phone has become an enabler of narcissism.

Negative consequences of smartphone use have been investigated over the last ten years. For instance, Salehan and Negahban (2013) found that high smartphone use is associated with

high social networking site (SNS) use and that SNS use as a predictor of smartphone addiction leads to narcissism. Studies have also shown that smartphone users who report more frequent SNS use also report higher addictive tendencies (Wu et al., 2013).

Research has shown that extroverts are more likely to own a mobile phone and are more likely to use the texting functions to communicate with others (Meier and Gray, 2014). According to Bianchi and Phillips (2015), the problematic usage of mobile phones is a function of age, extraversion, and low self-esteem. Studies have equally shown that extraverts use social media for social enhancement, whereas introverts use social media to disclose personal information (Pantic, 2014), thus using it for social compensation (Meier and Gray, 2014).

Roberts, Pullig and Manolis (2014) found that introversion was negatively associated with smartphone addiction. According to the 2016 South African Social Media Landscape Report, Instagram has more than doubled its users in the country and 25% of the South African population now uses Facebook (Kemp, 2016). The study found that in South Africa, there are 13 million Facebook users, 7.4 million Twitter users, 8.28 million YouTube users and 2.68 million Instagram users (World Wide Worx, 2016). As indicated by Kemp (2016), the usage of mobile phones is not merely a more favourable digital tool for usage, but has essentially changed the way people connect online. Indeed, McGrane (2013) found that mobile users only want to communicate on a digital tool which is more opportune and useful for their needs.

2.10 The selfie and narcissism

> "Despite the 'selfie' becoming a phenomenon of the 21st century, the act of sharing a selfie with friends' pre-dates the Internet. The act of distributing 'cartes de visite', or pocket-sized photo cards, dates to the 1860s" (Day, 2013, cited by Wickel, 2015: 5).

The photo-booth emerged in 1880, which encouraged citizens to take photos of themselves through the invention of the self-timer, which enabled people to feature in the photo. The time delay, which could be pre-set, was between five and ten seconds. The only difference between then and today is that today, people use their mobile phones to take selfies; thus, the photo-booth and pre-set timer are perceived as the origin of the selfie (Wickel, 2015).

> "Then there was the Polaroid. First sold from 1948 but not truly 'instant' until its 1970s heyday, Polaroid cameras could be held at arm's length and encouraged people to take more intimate photos… The Polaroid's big plus was that you didn't have to take a film to be developed" (BBC News, 2013: 1).

An Australian online post in 2002 was the first to publish the word "selfie", which is perceived as a 'slang' expression (Day, 2013). From then onwards, using this expression has increased 170 times (up to 2013), according to Day. This has led to the announcement of the Oxford English Dictionary to select "selfie" as "Word of the Year in 2013" (BBC News, 2013: 1; Day, 2013; Wickel, 2015).

Because users truly believe that others are interested in the selfies they post to social networking platforms, this has become an indicator of narcissistic behaviour for researchers (Alloway et al., 2014). These users are probably not aware that researchers associate their behaviour with narcissism (Carpenter, 2012). Previous studies suggest that narcissism is recognised, in combination with the use of individual communication, as a technique for self-enhancement and self-promotion (Panek, Nardis and Konrath, 2013).

Ridgway and Clayton (2017) found in a study they conducted that participants thought posting selfies allowed them to keep friends and family updated. This act could be flagged as self-promotion, which correlates with narcissism. Participants probably perceived the posting of selfies as a way for them to keep the focus of their profiles on themselves, which is also flagged as a narcissistic act (Aboujaoude, 2011).

Another common reason, "posting selfies to social networking platforms makes me feel good about myself" (Duggan and Smith, 2013: 78), is an undeniable indicator of narcissism. Regardless of whether the participants admit to it or not, they are participating in selfish behaviours. They feel posting selfies boosts their self-confidence. This correlates with the Pew Research study's finding that 52% of the adolescents who participated in their research admitted they had an experience through a social networking site that boosted their confidence (Duggan and Smith, 2013).

> "A selfie is an expression of an active online identity, something you have some control over. You might take lots, but you'll publish the ones you like — even if they are silly or unflattering" (BBC News, 2013: 1).

The reliance on social networking sites to make a person feel good about themselves indicates self-important behaviours associated with narcissism. Wickel (2015) states that the use of social networking platforms to maintain and build social relationships has changed how society interacts and perceives others, especially as the millennial generation invests too much effort and energy into building their online persona. According to Buffardi and Campbell

(2008), narcissists have an overly positive self-view, especially regarding their social popularity and physical appearance.

Liu and Baumeister (2016) suggest that narcissistic individuals that are more likely to present self-promotional content on social media elicit positive response from others. Since selfie-posting behaviour allows individuals to selectively present attractive and self-promoting photos of themselves (Diefenbach and Christoforakos, 2017), it is feasible that such behaviour would be more common in those with high narcissism. This can be explained by the dynamic self-regulatory processing model of narcissism.

For a better understanding of how narcissism influences selfie posting behaviour, Weiser (2015) suggests that narcissistic individuals may consider selfie-posting as an approach through which they can use their looks to garner both attention and admiration because they consider themselves to be physically attractive. Holtzman and Strube (2010) also note that physical attractiveness may be the underlying cause of narcissists' self-focus and public display. These suggestions indicate that individuals' body satisfaction may mediate the relation between narcissism and selfie-posting behaviour.

Recent studies have suggested that posting selfies on social networking sites has correlated with self-reporting narcissism in young males. In addition, the excessive use of sharing photographs, statuses and friends in self-promotion correlated with narcissist tendencies using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory scale (Carpenter, 2012). Wickel (2015), in his study reported on by Ridgway and Clayton (2016), reveal that 55% of the participants believed narcissistic behaviours are increasing because of posting selfies on the Internet. Wright et al. (2017) found that individuals who scored higher on narcissist traits post more photos on social networking sites.

> "For the Millennial Generation (Gen Y), the act of taking selfies and overall usage of various social media platforms is an integral part of life. The Millennial Generation's comfort with social platforms has given this specific age group a more positive view of how social media might be affecting their lives. Studies, however, link social media use in young adults to various behaviour development issues" (Noor Al-Deen & Hendricks, 2012, cited by Wickel, 2015: 5).

2.11 The impact of digital technology on millennials

The impact of the usage of digital technology on millennials and how it affects their inter-personal skills was first given recognition by Keen (2006, cited by Brown, Halpern and L'Engle, 2015). Digital technology allows people to regularly create a name for themselves

online so that they can fall in love with themselves repeatedly. This is referred to as digital narcissism (Pirelli, Otto and Estoup, 2016). In time, this has changed and as described by Freud's (1914, cited by Kauten and Barry, 2014) Theory of Narcissism, this condition refers to a general personality trait which includes delusions of grandiosity, fantasies of unlimited power, and exhibitionism.

According to Fox and Rooney (2015), we are living in a world where prime-time television has been taken over by a false reality, such as the American reality family show called "Keeping up with the Kardashians" and where constant selfies are posted online about anything. Families have supper with no verbal communication between each other; they rather give priority to online social media platforms and check their status on Facebook. This is now the new "norm" instead of traditional face-to-face conversations, especially with millennials (Pantic, 2014). Narcissism is further described as a condition where one possesses either healthy narcissism or pathological narcissism (Pantic, 2014).

In terms of healthy narcissism, Meier and Gray (2014) assert that this can describe an individuals aged 18–34 years (millennials) who may just have been appointed in his first job and who visits various social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter to show-off to the world (Pantic, 2014). Unhealthy narcissism, on the other hand, was first emphasised by Kuss (2016), who said an Internet addiction disorder was mooted over 20 years ago in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Disorders (Bell, 1994). For the disorder to be deemed a disorder, the person must experience at least three symptoms, namely lack of control, withdrawal, and relapse within one year (Kuss, 2016). Having an excessive interest in oneself appears to have become more prevalent amongst millennials in the Western world, due to the increasing usage of social networking sites (Pantic, 2014). Individuals can use social networking sites to enhance their careers, but there is concern that millennials may use the sites as an artificial mood booster (Reinhard et al., 2012). Accordingly, Kemp (2016) posits that the largest social networking sites used by millennials are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

2.12 Uses and Gratifications Theory and media usage

The Uses and Gratifications Theory postulates that people use media to gratify specific wants and needs they have (Pantic, 2014). Users are viewed as active agents who assert control over their media consumption, despite numerous media theories that label media users as passive.

2.12.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory origin and media usage

The Uses and Gratifications Theory was first introduced in the 1940s when scholars gained an interest in the reasons why people opted to consume different types of media (Reinhard et al., 2012). For the next few decades, uses and gratifications research primarily concentrated on the gratifications sought by media users. Then, in the 1970s, researchers re-focused their investigations on the outcomes of media use and the social and psychological needs that media gratified. Today, the theory is often credited to Blumler and Katz's (1973) work as maintained by Reinhard et al. (2012).

> "As media technologies continue to proliferate, research on Uses and Gratifications Theory is more important than ever for understanding people's motivations for choosing media and the gratifications that come out of its usage" (Pantic, 2014: 90).

2.12.2 Assumptions

Pirelli, Otto and Estoup (2016) assert that the Uses and Gratifications Theory relies on two principles about media users. First, it characterises media users as active in their selection of media usage. From this perspective, users do not need to use media passively. Instead, they must be engaged and motivated in the types of media selected. Secondly, Carpenter (2012) posits that users are generally aware of the reasons for selecting different media options. They rely on their knowledge of motivations to make media choices that help meet specific wants and needs.

Pantic (2014) suggests that based on those principles, uses and gratifications outline five assumptions:

i) "Media use is goal-directed; people are motivated to consume media.

ii) Media is selected based on the expectation that it will satisfy specific needs and desires.

iii) Media influence on behaviour is filtered through social and psychological factors. Thus, personality and social context impact the media choices one makes and one's interpretation of media messages.

iv) Media compete with other forms of communication for an individual's attention. For example, an individual may choose to have an in-person conversation about an issue instead of watching a documentary about the issue.

v)   People are usually in control of media and therefore are not particularly influenced by it" (Pantic, 2014: 45).

Integrated, the Uses and Gratifications Theory emphasises the power users have over the power of the media (Meier and Gray, 2014). The relationship between media and its effects are mediated by individual differences, resulting in media effects being driven as much by the user of the media as by the content of the media. Thus, users may view the same media message, but not everyone will be affected by the message in the same way (Kauten and Barry, 2014).

2.12.3   Research on Uses and Gratifications Theory

Numerous reasons why people consume media have been uncovered through conducting uses and gratifications research. Reasons include: (i) companionship; (ii) the force of habit; (iii) relaxation; (iv) escapism; (v) passing the time; and (vi) information. Pirelli, Otto and Estoup (2016) recommend that a novel body of research explores people's use of media to meet higher-order needs such as considering values and finding meaning. Research conducted from the perspective of uses and gratification involved all types of media, from radio to social media (Meier and Gray, 2014).

2.12.4   Media and personality

The use of gratifications' emphasis on individual differences has led researchers to examine the way personality influences people's motivation for using media. For example, studies conducted by researchers at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University looked at personality traits such as neuroticism and extroversion to see whether people with different traits would identify different motivations for watching television (Goodboy and Martin, 2015). The findings revealed that the motivations of participants with neurotic personalities include passing the time, companionship, relaxation, and stimulation. This was the reverse for participants with extraverted personalities. Kauten and Barry (2014) posit that while the neurotic personality types favoured the companionship motive most, extraverted personality types strongly rejected this motive as a reason to use social media. The researchers judged the results to be consistent with these two personality types.

2.12.5   Uses and gratifications and new media

Scholars have noted that new media include several characteristics that were not part of older forms of media (Fox and Rooney, 2015). Users have much more control over that with which they interact at the time they interact with it, and they are more content with choices. This

opens the number of gratifications that new media use may satisfy. An early study published in the *Cyberpsychology and Behavior Journal* (Song et al., 2004) on uses and gratifications of the Internet identified seven gratifications: information seeking, aesthetic experience, monetary compensation, diversion, personal status, relationship maintenance, and virtual community (Goodboy and Martin, 2015).

Brown, Halpern and L'Engle (2015) assert that the virtual community could be considered a new gratification as it has no parallel with other forms of media. There appears to be three gratifications for Internet usage (Meier and Gray, 2014). Two of these gratifications, content, and process gratifications, had been found before in studies of the uses and gratifications of television. However, a new social gratification specific to Internet use was also found (Carpenter, 2012). These two mentioned studies indicate that people look to the Internet to fulfil social and communal needs. Research has also been conducted to uncover the gratifications sought and obtained through social media use. For instance, Brown, Halpern and L'Engle (2015) note four needs for Facebook group participation. These needs include: (i) socialising by staying in touch and meeting people; (ii) entertainment using Facebook for amusement or leisure; (iii) seeking self-status by maintaining one's image; and (iv) seeking information to learn about events and products.

In a similar study, researchers found that Twitter users gratified their need for connection through the social network. Increased usage, both in terms of the amount of time one had been active on Twitter and in terms of the number of hours per week one spends using Twitter, increased the gratification of this need.

2.12.6 Critique of uses and gratifications

While the Uses and Gratifications Theory remains popular in media research, it faces several criticisms (Kauten and Barry, 2014). For example, the theory downplays the importance of media. As a result, it may overlook the way media influences people, especially unconsciously. Also, while audiences may not always be passive, they may not always be active either—something the theory does not account for. Furthermore, according to Livingstone (2015), some critics claim that uses and gratifications are too broad to be considered a theory and should therefore only be considered an approach to media research.

On the other hand, the Uses and Gratifications Theory is also criticised for its "very utilitarian perspective of individual behaviour regarding the choice of media" (Fox and Rooney, 2015: 78). The assumption that the choice of media is merely attributed to "purely instrumental behaviour", leads to the probability that one forgets the use of media may be the result of

"ritual behaviour" (Fox and Rooney, 2015: 78). This may also lead to ignoring the importance of the sociocultural environment and its ability to influence media selection (Fox and Rooney, 2015: 78). Meier and Gray (2014) contend that these limits remain relative to digital context because, different to traditional media, the Internet returns increased power to individuals. Thus, owing to its interactive features and its many tools, individuals have a freer choice and become more active. This corresponds to one of the fundamental hypotheses on which the Uses and Gratifications Theory is based. In addition, even the limit of its conceptualisation of an individual characterised by too much instrumental behaviour (i.e., goal-oriented choice) becomes characterised because the focus is on professional networking sites, which are interest-oriented social media. It is thus needed to explore and examine professional networking sites in a similar way to online social networks (Facebook in particular), especially because the overall "hierarchy of motivations", discovered in a digital social network context, may be considerably different from that of professional networking sites, specifically because we are very aware of how different the two contexts are structurally (Carpenter, 2012: 23).

2.13 Summary

This chapter provided insights into the introduction, origin, and evaluation of social media. The drivers and causation of narcissism were equally stated. A discussion on the impact of social media taking into consideration Facebook and Twitter was also stated. The chapter explained that there are positive and negative impacts of digital technology on millennials, while the expansion of mobile phones in society has one negative impact, which allows the millennials to develop traits of narcissism, including indulgence in the selfie phenomenon. In Chapter Three, the research methodology of the study is discussed.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the focus is on the research methodology and design of the study. First, the study's research paradigm is presented. Next, the research design is explained, which comprises the research approach, methodological choice, and research strategy. This is followed by a discussion on the data collection and data analysis, where after insight is provided into the delimitations and ethical considerations of the research. The chapter is concluded with a summary.

3.2 Research paradigm

Research can be defined as creating/developing new knowledge and/or applying existing knowledge innovatively and creatively to deliver methodologies, understanding and concepts that are new (Hoy, 2014). According to Neuman (2017), research is a principal method of acquiring knowledge and uncovering causes of behaviour. Hampshire College (2022) defines research as "a process of systematic inquiry that entails collection of data; documentation of critical information; and analysis and interpretation of that data/information, in accordance with suitable methodologies set by specific professional fields and academic disciplines".

The research paradigm is critical to the entire research process as it directs researchers on the overall process of investigation, including the selection of the research problem, properly casting the problem, the setting of the research, the nature and types of reality, knowledge, methodology and value of the research work (Khatri, 2020). The use of paradigms offers different ways of observing, measuring, and understanding social reality. Paradigms serve as an organising framework made up of theory, basic assumptions, key issues, models of quality research and methods for seeking answers (Neuman, 2017).

For this study, the researcher adopted the behaviourist research paradigm, which is interpretive, particularly within media effects. Behaviourists argue that human behaviour can be explained in terms of external stimuli, responses, learned histories and reinforcement (Nel, 2018). According to Nel (2018), all mental states, including beliefs, values, motives and reasons can only be defined in terms of observable behaviour. The researcher situated this study within the behaviourist paradigm because it provides a potential 'explanation' for the cause and effects of observable behaviour, in this case, the (potential) impact of social media on narcissistic behaviour.

3.3 Research design

For this study, the Research Onion design of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2018) was adopted, with the main focus on the research approach, methodological choice and research strategy.

3.3.1 Research approach

According to Baxter and Jack (2010), the research approach helps researchers facilitate the exploration of a phenomenon within its context using data sources, and ensures that the essence of the phenomenon is revealed (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2002). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2018: 153) identified three approaches to social research:

> "If your research starts with theory, often developed from your reading of the academic literature, and you design a research strategy to test the theory, you are using a deductive approach… Conversely, if your research starts by collecting data to explore a phenomenon and you generate or build theory (often in the form of a conceptual framework), then you are using an inductive approach… Where you are collecting data to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and explain patterns, to generate a new or modify an existing theory which you subsequently test through additional data collection, you are using an abductive approach".

For this study, the researcher adopted an inductive approach as data were collected to explore a phenomenon (digital narcissism), and, from the analysed data, theory was built and then used to develop and propose a framework.

3.3.2 Methodological choice

The methodological choice, according to the Research Onion design of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2018), can be qualitative (non-numeric), quantitative (numeric) or both. For this study, qualitative data were collected from selected participants and analysed to derive findings, thus, the methodological choice was qualitative research. Adopting the qualitative research methodology implies that the data generated mainly take on the format of words instead of numbers (Patton and Cochran, 2002).

Bhandari (2022: 1) defines qualitative research as the collection and analysis of "non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research". Cresswell (2017) posits that qualitative research is designed to help researchers 'figure out' or comprehend people and the social and cultural contexts in which they live. The goal of understanding a phenomenon from the participant's perspective, and from a certain social and institutional context, is largely lost when textual data are quantified (Cresswell, 2017).

3.3.3   Research strategy

A research strategy directs the research through a well-planned, step-by-step process (Wedawatta, Ingirige and Amaratunga, 2011). Examples of research strategies include, amongst others, archival research, case study, ethnography, action research, grounded theory, narrative inquiry, experiment, and survey (i.e. questionnaires, interviews, observations, focus group discussions).

This study employed two strategies, namely the *case study* and *survey* strategies. A case study is empirical research that explores a "contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Wedawatta, Ingirige and Amaratunga, 2011: 1). In this study, the research was conducted at the Durban University of Technology.

Survey research involves obtaining information on one or more groups of people by asking questions and tabularising their responses (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). The use of surveys aligns with interpretive research design, and it allowed the researcher to "generalise legitimately from a few people to many more and has been used as part of exploratory research" (Neuman, 2017: 49).

3.4   Data collection

In this section, the data collection process and the instruments used to collect the data, are discussed in detail.

3.4.1   Target population

The target population is defined as the entire group of people (or objects) that researchers are interested in to generalise the conclusions, when possible (Singh, 2016). The target population, also known as the theoretical population, generally display characteristics that vary.

For this study, the target population comprised four groups: (i) millennials of all races 18–34 years of age in the KwaZulu-Natal Province who have been on social media platforms such as Facebook for more than two years, and who have more than 300 friends online; (ii) parents of millennials; (iii) social media experts; and (iv) psychology experts using social media tools (with the criteria of having more than 500 friends and several years' online presence) to gain their insight and expert advice on whether social media is spawning digital narcissism.

3.4.2 Sampling

Sampling is performed as result of the impossibility of including the whole population in the research (Dawson, 2017). The sample population comprises a percentage (or subset) of the theoretical population that the researcher has reasonable access to. Sampling is the technique applied to select units from a population of interest. This is done in such a way that by reviewing the sample in depth, a reasonable generalisation of the findings can be attributed to the population from which the sample was drawn (Trochim, 2016).

For this research, purposive sampling was applied because of the subjective nature of the study. The sample was deliberately chosen by the researcher according to predetermined non-probability criteria (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018). The purposive sampling method was used to identify and choose participants who have been using social media for a while, those who have been witnessing the evolution of social media and the different effects (impacts) it employs (Harisankar and Babu, 2021). Since the participants comprised of millennials, psychologists, parents of millennials and celebrities/social influencers that have been using social media over a period of time, their experience contributed towards obtaining appropriate and substantial data on the research topic.

3.4.3 Sample size

From the identified target population groups, twelve (12) participants were purposively chosen to explore their views on the influence social media usage has on millennials in terms of digital narcissism. Small numbers of the research population in qualitative studies are typically linked with gaining an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, which aligns with the small number of participants chosen for this research (Radu, 2019).

3.4.4 Research instruments

For survey research, one or more data collection methods are used. Of these methods, questionnaires, interviews, observations, and focus group discussions are commonly used in social research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018). For this study, in-depth interviews were selected for the data collection as it enabled the researcher to have direct, personal contact with the participants. It furthermore enhanced the dismissal of non-response rates (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013).

For the data collection instrument, the researcher developed four semi-structured interview schedules (also called guides) for each of the four sample groups, containing open-ended questions based on the research objectives. The four interview guides and number of questions

per guide are as follows: (i) three questions for local celebrities/social media experts (Appendix B); (ii) three questions for educational and clinical psychologists (Appendix C); (iii) four questions for millennials (Appendix D); and (iv) three questions for parents of millennials (Appendix E).

The data were captured using an audio recorder and written notes, which were transcribed for data analysis purposes (Alshenqeeti, 2014). The semi-structured interview schedules were considered important as it offered the researcher the opportunity to have easy access to participants familiar with the constructs of the study.

3.5   Data analysis

Data analysis is defined as the process of reviewing, cleaning, transforming, and shaping data to ascertain useable and valuable information, thus, the process enables the researcher to draw conclusions and make decisions (Ruxton and Colegrave, 2016). Hoy (2014) describes data analysis as the process of employing logical and/or statistical procedures and techniques in a systematic way to portray, clarify, summarise, and assess data. According to Shamoo and Resnik (2016), multiple procedures can be applied to provide inductive inferences from the collected data.

Given this research's qualitative nature, thematic analysis was used to analyse the collect data. Kiger and Varpio (2020: 2) define thematic analysis as a method of qualitative data analysis involving the searching across datasets to identify, analyse and report repeated patterns. Thematic analysis helps researchers to appropriately describe data vis-à-vis their interpretation and the process of selecting codes and constructing themes. The NVivo software Version 12 was used to analyse the audio-visual and textual sources of data. This software helped the researcher to categorise and code various data sources into a single project file, while simultaneously assigning attributes (e.g., demographics) to the data for comparison. It also assisted the researcher with visualising the data and keeping record of annotations and memorandums.

3.6   Pilot study

An important phase of the research process is the pilot study, performed to examine a proposed approach's feasibility for use in large-scale research, and to determine if any modification is required to the research process (Leon, Davis and Kraemer, 2012). For this research, the outcome of the pilot study indicated no shortcomings in the interview schedule. The pilot study was administered to four participants who were identical to the target population. The

main purpose of conducting a pilot study was to determine whether: (i) the participants understand the questions; (ii) the interview questions are relevant to the research questions; and (iii) the proposed approach is feasible to be applied in the larger study.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Levy and Lemeshow (2013) point to the importance of ethical considerations in research. Ethics is defined as morals and standards to be upheld when research is conducted, as it assists the researcher with distinguishing between right and wrong, and between acceptable and unacceptable conduct (Babbie and Mouton, 2012; Hoy, 2014; Resnik, 2020). For this research, the researcher upheld the ethical considerations as follows:

   i)   **Ensuring no harm comes to participants:** A letter of informed consent stating the aims and objectives of the study was provided, affirming that participants' participation was voluntary. The letter also contained a clarification of the level of participation needed for the study.

   ii) **Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity:** The confidentiality and anonymity of participants were ensured by the researcher compiling and administering an interview guide with interview questions that did not solicit any information that could expose or endanger the participants.

   iii) **Ensuring that permission is obtained:** A letter of permission was obtained from the ethical clearance office of the Durban University of Technology (Appendix A), which granted the researcher permission to conduct interviews via online social media platforms.

3.8 Limitations of the study

Gray and Wegner (2013) maintain that a study's limitations include challenges that may compromise the generalisability of the research findings. This research was an exploratory study of which the sample number (of participants) was modest; thus, representation of the population may not have been adequate. It was therefore difficult for the researcher to generalise the findings to a wider population.

The subjective and non-probable unit selection of purposive sampling makes it difficult for the researcher to defend the sample's representativeness. It is therefore challenging to convince the reader that the assessment applied in selecting the sample units is appropriate. Notwithstanding the limitations indicated, the researcher endeavoured to find evidence from

other studies described in literature. Sekaran and Bougie (2013) state that every study has limitations that exist due to constraints on research design or methodology, and these factors may affect the findings of a study. In this regard, some of the limitations of this study are premised on limited access to data and time constraints.

3.8.1 Limited access

In this study, access to certain people that were required for the study was a problem in terms of their availability. The researcher had limited access to these participants because of work commitments. Due to this limited access, there was a need to redesign the research.

3.8.2 Time constraints

The main limitation of this research was time constraints. The researcher had a very limited time duration to carry out the research (Goddard and Melville, 2014) and was therefore not able to collect sufficient authentic data and information for the research. Busy schedules of participants also had an influence on the credibility of data.

3.9 Summary

In this chapter, the research paradigm and research design of the study was explained in detail, which included the research approach, methodological choice and research strategy. The case study and survey were identified as strategies for this qualitative study. For the data collection, the target population, sampling methods, sample size and data collection instruments were discussed. The data analysis conducted by employing thematic analysis was elaborated on. Finally, the importance of research ethics was explained.

Chapter Four presents the data analysis, findings, and data interpretation. The themes and sub-themes derived from the findings are also presented and discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the outcome of the data gathering process, reports on the results, and discusses the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews with participants that were purposively selected at the Durban University of Technology in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. The data that emerged from the interviews were coded with the aid of software (NVIVO version 12).

4.2 Demographics of participants

Four groups of participants were identified for this study. To maintain anonymity, each participant was assigned a code. The demographics of each group are indicated the sub-sections below.

4.2.1 Millennials

The millennials group comprised students of Durban University of Technology (DUT). They were invited to participate in the research via a notification on the DUT student portal. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted via telephonic and electronic means rather than the face-to-face method.

Table 4.1: Demographic information of millennials

Millennial Code	Relevant Information of Millennial
Millennial 1	Male, 23-years old; obtained his ND: Engineering Electrical (Instrumentation) in 2020; he aims to further his studies upon completion of his Bachelor of Technology (BTech) degree, which is at the end of 2020. He wants to find employment in a position as a junior technician or graduate in training, thereafter he will pursue his Master's degree.
Millennial 2	Female, 23-years old; obtained her ND in Architectural Technology in 2020; she aims to obtain her Master's degree in Architecture and thereafter own an architectural practice that specialises in high-rise Architecture and eco-friendly urban designs.
Millennial 3	Female, 23-years old; achieved the Dean's Merit awards in her Bachelor of the Built Environment in Urban and Regional Planning in 2020; she is currently working as a part-time tutor for first and second year students, and aims to become a project manager, environmental planner or a GIS specialist.
Millennial 4	Female, 24-years old; obtained her Diploma in Shipping and Logistics in 2020; she wants to continue working her way to the top in her career field and hopes to become a strong, fearless leader in the shipping world.

Millennial Code	Relevant Information of Millennial
Millennial 5	Female, 24-years old; qualified Journalism graduate, registered for her Advanced Diploma in Journalism; she freelances for Environmental non-profit organisations in Durban.
Millennial 6	Female, 20-years old; has a Diploma in Analytical Chemistry, presently studying towards her Advanced Diploma in Chemistry; she aims to obtain a job in a medical or pharmaceutical laboratory whereby her focus will be directed on medicinal or pharmaceutical chemistry.
Millennial 7	Male, 27-years old; obtained Master's in Mechanical Engineering in 2020, currently working as a Factory Engineering Manager (HOD Engineering) for a company in Pretoria. Going forward, his aim is to contribute sustainable Engineering knowledge in industries.
Millennial 8	Male, 27-years old; has his National Diploma in Information Technology, now on a contract employed as a Web Developer at a UoT; his aim is attaining employment in an environment where he can grow as a computer programmer and work towards becoming the expert that others rely on.
Millennial 9	Female, 20-years old; completed her Bachelor of Technology in Public relations; she is working on her proposal for her Master's in Public Relations.
Millennial 10	Male, 21-years old; has his Bachelor of Technology in Public Relations; he aims to do his Master's in Public Relations.
Millennial 11	Female, 30-years old; working on her Public relations Master's proposal for 2021.

4.2.2 Parents of millennials

The parents selected were not attached to the millennials participating in the study for ethical reasons. They were invited to participate in the study through online requests on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The interviews were conducted telephonically at the participants' convenience.

Table 4.2: Demographic information of parents of millennials

Parent of Millennial Code	Relevant Information of Parent of Millennial
Parent 1	Female, 48-years old, unemployed mom to 24-year-old male; she currently lives with her son in KZN who works as a freelance driver for Uber Eats.
Parent 2	Male, father to 19-year-old male; works as a SARS consultant in Durban.
Parent 3	Female, 46-year-old locum teacher, mom to 23-year-old male who is a Law graduate and 20-year-old female who is studying to become a physiotherapist.
Parent 4	Female, Union Administrator at a University of Technology, mom to 22-year-old who is working on her proposal to study towards her Master's in Business Law.
Parent 5	Female, works as a Client Liaison at Digital Printing Company in Durban. She has a 19-year-old and 21-year-old daughter, both studying in KZN.

4.2.3   Local celebrities/social media experts who embrace social media

Local celebrities/social media experts were invited to participate in the study through online requests on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The interviews were conducted telephonically and via electronic media at the participants' convenience.

Table 4.3: Demographic information of local celebrities/experts

Local Celebrity/ Expert Code	Relevant Information of Local Celebrity/Expert
Celeb1	Male, leading couturier, constantly posting on social media platforms Facebook and Instagram.
Celeb 2	Female, celebrity journalist, social media expert and influencer who has a great passion for media and mass communication.
Celeb 3	Female, celebrity Journalist, executive producer and news editor.
Celeb 4	Male, social entrepreneur and public speaker, and CEO.
Celeb 5	Female, blogger, author and managing editor.
Celeb 6	Female, celebrity model, social media influencer, brand ambassador.

4.2.4   Educational and clinical psychologists

Educational and clinical psychologists were sought through medical directories and contacted directly for potential participation in the study. The interviews were conducted telephonically and via electronic media at the participants' convenience.

Table 4.4: Demographic information of educational and clinical psychologists

Psychologist Code	Relevant Information of Educational and Clinical Psychologists
Psychologist 1	Counselling Psychologist in Durban; the interview was conducted telephonically in October 2020.
Psychologist 2	Qualified Psychologist, employed at a University of Technology; email interview.
Psychologist 3	Clinical Psychologist, Durban; email interview.
Psychologist 4	Female, Clinical Psychologist, who has given many talks and presentations at events and on radio; she is very active on Instagram and has a following of more than 10K.
Psychologist 5	Psychologist, Student Counselling.
Psychologist 6	Intern Psychologist, Counselling and Health.

4.3 Emerging themes and sub-themes from the interviews with participants

The analysis of the data gathered from the in-depth interviews resulted in the identification of five themes with corresponding sub-themes, highlighted in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Identification of themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Impact of digital technology	1.1 Communication skills
	1.2 Parental control of usage
	1.3 Life without digital technology
	1.4 Time spent without access to digital technology
	1.5 Online and offline feeling
2. Social media and Internet usage	2.1 Social media platforms
	2.2 Social media posting
	2.3 Selfies
3. Impact of social media	3.1 Health and well-being
	3.2 Social relationship
	3.3 Society
	3.4 Personality
4. Social influencers	4.1 Direct and indirect impact
	4.2 Importance of followers
	4.3 Preferred type of followers
	4.4 Need for more followers
	4.5 Benefits of social media for artists
5. Impact of Covid-19	5.1 Relationship with others
	5.2 Followership

Themes were identified in line with answering the research questions, which are:

SRQ1: What are the implications of being a millennial in KZN where one grows with immersion in social media?

SRQ2: Can millennials be classified as a narcissistic generation with traits of growing self-obsession?

SRQ3: What are the risks related to narcissism in digital millennials' sense of self?

In addition, and in support of discussing the themes, relevant quotes from the data generated from the interviews are stated in the next sections. Data collected from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim and used as such during the discussion. The names of interviewees have been changed to ensure anonymity.

4.4   Theme 1: Impact of digital technology

4.4.1   Sub-theme 1.1: Communication skills

Rodríguez-de-Dios and Igartua (2017) assert that the digital society today is characterised by an extensive use of technologies. While communication using digital technologies offers the user numerous possibilities and benefits (Livingstone, 2013), it raises a serious concern about the diverse risks associated with its use. Consistent with this view, it was uncovered that communication using digital technologies has both negative and positive influences. Most celebrities as well as the millennials interviewed, offered insight into the negative and positive influences of digital technology.

4.4.1.1   Negative impacts of digital technology on communication skills

In terms of communication skills, it was uncovered that digital technologies had negatively affected the public speaking of children. One of the celebrities accentuated that:

> *With school yes. I can see the difference in verbal communication with children I meet. I work a lot with children doing presentation, public speaking etc. so social media has negatively affected their ability to speak, spell and even talk or complete simple tasks unless they "live" in their virtual world (Celeb #3).*

Echoing similar sentiments, another celebrity interviewed voiced a concern that people now choose to interact online. The consequence of this is that it had killed the culture of meeting up and interacting with others.

> *A bit of but mostly negative, people choose to interact online now which has someone killed the culture of meeting up to catch up amongst people (Celeb #6).*

Expressing similar opinion as the celebrities, many of the millennials interviewed affirmed that digital technology had negatively affected their verbal communication skills. It was uncovered from the analysis that digital technology creates a false sense of confidence online. Equally, some of the millennials revealed that they feel more anxious having face-to-face interaction with people. This may help explain why some of them isolate themselves.

Negatives—I know that at times I tend to isolate myself more when using digital technology, instead of spending time with family and friends. I also feel more confident communicating with new people when I use online communication tools instead of talking to them in person (Millennial #5).

Negative—Communicating online gives you a certain level of confidence because you are protected behind a screen. When I communicate in person, I sometimes feel more anxiety when I am meeting someone for the first time (Millennial #6).

It was also uncovered that digital technology has affected table etiquette. This is illuminated in the statement below made by one of the millennials:

Negative—Because you forget how to talk to someone else, example sitting at a restaurant for supper with your family and people at the table posting pictures of their food instead of eating it... It minimises verbal communication (Millennial #4).

Another negative consequence of digital technology is the shunning away of responsibilities. It was uncovered that digital technology has shortened personal 'verbal' communication, thus making it difficult to gauge people's emotions and/or their intentions.

Digital Technology has played a negative role on verbal communications skills because it shortens our communication in these days. There is not much of verbal communications now because everyone is on their phones doing personal things. People turn to run away from other things because they know that digital is technology. As much as it allows you to communicate easily but verbal allows getting to see the person you are talking to and get to see their intentions (Millennial #9).

The use of foul and vulgar language was another consequence of poor verbal communication skills acquired using digital technology.

Bad because most people often use vulgar language when they are communicating and sometimes, I find myself using the same language they are using which is not good (Millennial #10).

While the positive role of digital technology was acknowledged by some of the parents interviewed, one of the parents raised a concern of millennials trading real social interaction to what the participants termed 'inanimate objects'.

Generally, the stance is that social media has played a positive role for teenagers, especially as a parent, it has built confidence in terms of them doing research online, etc. However, the social aspect becomes the problem as most prefer to have conversation from their phones, rather than go out, many I feel have become

a-social, preferring the company of inanimate objects rather than people, this is the new norm and the reality, going forward (Parent #6).

Added to the above, most professional psychologists interviewed also voiced their concerns on the negative effect of digital technology. The concerns shared by the psychologist include social segregation, danger of losing communication skills, and anxiety. These are reflected in the following statements:

With the increased use of these forms of communication there is a danger of losing our skills with the interpretation non-verbal communication. Face-to-face communication with the help of interpreting body language, eye gaze, posture etc. helps in integrating all the information and then respond (Psychologist #3).

Yes. People are not able to communicate effectively as digital media tends to socially segregate people (Psychologist #4).

I have noticed a lot more people are anxious, maybe people have lost jobs, students are finding it hard to study in terms of online, so I have noted a lot of anxiety amongst everyone. The young adults because of their age and they are used to using technology more, we have found students are utilising more of our service through the online platform (Psychologist #5).

Apart from the concerns, another notable consequence of digital technology was found to be the emotional detachment it causes to the user. As argued by one of the psychologists:

There is less emotion in digital technology as there would be with an eye to contact (Psychologist #4).

In summary, one could infer that digital technology presents a negative impact on the communication skills of the millennials. For example, trading reality for a virtual word was noted to give millennials a false sense of confidence whilst isolating them from having real life interactions with others. One of the professional psychologists interviewed noted the following:

Millennials are swayed by social media, blurred boundaries, inaccurate assessments of clients, loss of self-confidence, loss of the essence of physical, social connectivity, and refuting the systems theory and interconnectedness. Change in communication patterns (Psychologist #2).

4.4.1.2   *Positive impacts of digital technology on communication skills*

Despite the negative concern and influence of digital technology shared by all the participants interviewed, some also acknowledged the profound benefits of the technology. For instance,

some of the celebrities interviewed noted that digital technology has given a voice to many people.

> *Positive. Everyone now has a soap box to say what they like but thanks to our reporting people now know their limits or have an idea of their limits (Celeb #3).*

> *It has been positive in that me, a normal person, now has a voice and a reach into society that is unprecedented (Celeb #5).*

Added to the above, it was uncovered that through digital technology, families can stay connected. It also presents an avenue for business promotion, information searching and sharing of views.

> *Positive, in that it connects you with friends and family no matter where they are. It is also a great platform to promote your business or find interests or input/feedback on your work. It is also great to see the 'mood on the ground' on certain issues in society. It is also an outlet to vent your frustrations or share your views and connect with your 'tribe' (Celeb #4).*

> *It has impacted me positively because I am able to keep a connection with family and friends even if I do not see them for long periods of time (Millennial #2).*

Equally important, and drawing from the data extracted, it was uncovered that digital technology has improved both the social and scholastic life of some of the participants.

> *Positive. I still do not believe everything I read online. But I still love the little titbits of information that help me pass my time, maybe inspire me to do some research and digging and find a nice news angle to cover on the radio current affairs programme (Celeb #3).*

> *It has impacted positively. My social skills and especially my scholastic life have improved drastically (Millennial #3).*

> *Positives—Digital technology excites me; I want to learn how to use different things and it also inspires me to learn how to present my own work on these different platforms (Millennial #5).*

Besides the above, and contrary to earlier assertions that digital technology negatively affected people's verbal communication skills, the data extracted from the millennials interviewed suggest that digital technology has somewhat improved their verbal communication skills. Some of the millennial participants excitedly noted that digital technology has presented them with opportunities to learn new technology, practice their communication skills via voice chats, etc., and read educated books online. These, in turn, were found to improve the verbal

communication skills of the millennials interviewed. In terms of improving the millennial terminology, the following was shared:

It has played a positive role on my communication skills whereby my vocabulary has enhanced, and I learnt new terminology. It has also positively impacted my social skills and scholastic life as I was able to grasp many educational concepts using technology (Millennial #6).

I have improved my verbal communication through the digital tech. by learning fast the new words and thus using them in my communication when needed (Millennial #7).

Regarding the ability to practice their verbal communication skills using digital technology, a participant accentuated that:

With features that digital technology has such as the ability to make phone calls, voice calls, video calls and record ourselves lets me practice and use my verbal communication skills over the phone or on a computer or laptop. I can find videos on how to learn verbal communication skills on YouTube (Millennial #1).

In terms of inspirational and educational books enhancing verbal communication, it was uncovered from the testimony of two of the millennials that people post educational materials such as books, articles, and documentaries on digital platforms.

It has also improved my verbal communication skills because there are people who post things that are educational, and this enhances my knowledge (Millennial #10).

Digital technology has played a positive role in my verbal communication skills. I read many online books, educational articles and watch documentaries (Millennial #3).

Further to the above, it was uncovered that digital technology eases communication.

It plays a positive role and thanks to technology that there are no barriers because communication is now easy in case of situations when you want to convey something urgently to someone mobiles and emails come in handy (Millennial #8).

Social media has played a positive role on digital millennials, it keeps us technology advanced, keeps us ahead of matters (Parent #3).

One of the psychologists interviewed aptly summarised the benefits of digital technology:

Positive impact is that it provides an educational platform encouraging the learning of new skills. Socially keeping distant relatives and friends in touch with each other. Also help increased ability to communicate on a global scale,

socialising on a global scale, sharing of ideas etc. Exposure of topics of interest that need to be addressed and obtaining large scale support even on a global basis. For example, banning of plastic and black lives matter (Psychologist #3).

The parents of the millennials interviewed also reinforced the positive and negative dimensions of digital technology.

> *I think both positive and negative. Positive—Information is readily available for research and their studies. Negative—It is a distraction while you are studying as friend's post and contact you while you study. Makes people vane (Parent #5).*

> *It has its advantages and disadvantages in that my kids never use to read the newspapers but because it is accessible online, they read the news and is kept abreast. It has also given them a broad knowledge of information (Parent #4).*

A critical point emerging from the above sub-theme is that digital technology has both positive and negative consequences to the user. The findings from this study corroborate with other scholars (Dias et al., 2016) who noted that digital technologies have a double-sided nature. Moreover, in line with other studies (Holloway, Green and Livingstone, 2013; Livingstone et al., 2015), while digital technologies can be a powerful tool for self-empowerment, expression, and a source of educational materials and resources, it also holds multiple dangers to which millennials are particularly vulnerable.

4.4.2   Sub-theme 1.2: Parental control of usage

Each of the aforementioned social systems may affect people's appropriation of digital technologies (Dias et al., 2016: 416). Hence, it becomes critical to know from the perspective of the parents of millennials whether they monitor and control digital usage at home. Many of the parents stressed that they did not monitor millennials' use of digital technologies. Reasons include millennials being adults and the trust parents have in the millennial generation.

> *No, as a parent I trust my kids (Parent #3).*

> *My kids are adults and I do not monitor their social media usage (Parent #4).*

While parents did not monitor the millennials, the lack of self-control is a source of worry to them. This is reflected in the statement below:

> *No, he is an adult, so I do expect him to be able to know what his limits are, but I am worried that he does not have boundaries in terms of time usage as he can play on his PlayStation for hours non-stop (Parent #6).*

One parent, whilst acknowledging not monitoring her millennial's digital usage, attributed

this to the dearth of digital technology knowledge and time constraints. Nonetheless, the interviewee had family members monitoring the social content usage.

> *Not really. The reason being, I am not so tech savvy and time is sometimes an issue. However, I am aware of some of the apps they are on. Their social media content and usage is monitored by some of my immediate family. I am informed of any unusual interactions or content not appropriate (Parent #2).*

Added to the above submission, other parents stressed the need to monitor millennials' usage of digital technologies.

> *Try to be vigilant of the social media trends. Watch the news or newspapers for current social media issues. Speak with friends, colleagues, etc. to be aware of what is occurring in the social media environment. Monitor their usage directly or indirectly. Put in boundaries and advise them of the consequences on not keeping to the required. Act on non-conformance by withdrawing the devices. Constantly speaking of the uses of social media - both the positive and negative impacts of it (Parent #2).*

Parent # 2 further reasoned why online activities by millennials need to be monitored:

> *From a security point of view, not knowing the apps, blogs, websites they are viewing, the people they are meeting online and conversely the people that are trying to befriend them via online media (Parent #2).*

The above statement corroborates with other studies that parents play the role of gatekeepers to facilitate and constrain the access and use of digital technologies (Plowman 2015; Dias et al., 2016). This may be attributed to parents seeking to balance the education aspirations they have for millennials and their fears of harmful consequences of excessive use of digital technologies (Dias et al., 2016). This may also help explain the need to instil moral values to the millennial generation.

> *I have to make sure that I continue to teach right from wrong. I instil values and morals and the children need to know that we as parents are the provider in our home and need to be respected (Parent #5).*

The above narrative further reinforces the assertion of Plowman (2015) that parents' attitudes towards their millennials' engagement with technologies can be categorised as either guarded or well-disposed.

4.4.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Life without digital technology

One of the psychologists hinted that keeping millennials away from social media is doing them a disservice. This view may originate from the fact that we live in a digital age where digital technologies play a prominent role in our everyday lives. In agreement, all the millennials interviewed hinted to the frustration and emotional challenges they might face without digital technologies.

I will go through a lot of negative emotions. I will feel bored and disappointed, since it's available I will feel upset that I am not able to access or use digital tech (Millennial #1).

I will be frustrated because it has become an essential to my daily living (Millennial #2).

It would have been boring because there is so much that I am gaining from digital technology, like entertainment, I am always updated of what is happening around us and it has also improved the way of thinking as a person (Millennial #10).

Some millennials even alluded to the fact that the world will not make sense without digital technology, 'as everything revolves around it'.

Stuck on a planet that made no sense everything is about technology as everything can be found on the internet (Millennial #4).

Terrible, the entire life revolves around digital tech. Searching for places to buy anything near you or the quality of service is done through digital tech (Millennial #7).

Equally, it was uncovered that performing tasks will become more difficult without digital technology, thereby heightening their frustration.

I would honestly feel lost. I rely on digital technology for almost everything. Technology makes lives easier and without it, I would struggle, and it would take me longer to complete my daily tasks (Millennial #3).

Digital technology is a privilege, and it is something that has become a necessity in the work environment. If I did not have access to this, it would be much harder for me to do the everyday tasks that are required of me. And this would make me feel frustrated (Millennial #5).

That means my world will never be the same again and that means I will not be happy at all because we all are living in the modern time and digital technology is the new way of living now and it makes a lot of things very and that makes our lives easier too (Millennial #8).

Things wouldn't be good because digital technology helps you do things easily with a short period of time while if it was not there some things would have taken long to reach them or do (Millennial #9).

Drawing from above, it is safe to assume that life without digital technology will present an immense challenge to millennials. Arguably, frustration, boredom, and difficulties of completing tasks may be linked to an overdependence of digital technology. Nevertheless, one of the millennials noted that it is not impossible to live without it.

I would feel despondent because digital technology has become a vital need for the modern era. It seems difficult to imagine a world without technology, but this isn't impossible as I was someone who was once able to live without digital technology when I was much younger. I am always reminded of the statement, "We should control technology and not let technology control us" when I am asked this question (Millennial #6).

4.4.4   Sub-theme 1.4: Time spent without access to digital technology

Holloway, Green and Livingstone (2013) in a study observed that children become accustomed to being stimulated by digital technologies from an early age. Notwithstanding this, a critical point that emerged is that living without digital technology is not impossible. It becomes relevant to know what the millennials would do if they do not have access to digital technology. Many of the millennials disclosed that they would read books, become a better cook, and spend more time outdoors and with family and friends.

I'll play outside, read a book, and do exercise more often (Millennial #1).

I would spend more time doing art and watching television (Millennial #2).

I would spend more time with my family and friends. Maybe find a new hobby (Millennial #3).

I think cook and bake and be outdoors (Millennial #4).

I think I would be a more avid reader and a better cook (Millennial #5).

I would spend more time with my family, read books and the Bible more often, go on outdoor adventures and get in shape (Millennial #6).

Read a book, play board games with friends, jog, or cycle (Millennial #7).

Comparable to millennials, celebrities who are heavy users of digital technologies also shared similar sentiments. Celebrities will use their time doing other activities, i.e., reading books, cooking, writing, and above all, spending time with those they care for.

Read a lot more newspapers, magazines etc. to source good hard-hitting news stories. Keep up to date with news trends. Listen to the radio more and watch TV more (Celeb #3).

I would read, write and be outside more (Celeb #5).

Spend most of it with everyone who cares about me and read a lot (Celeb #6).

According to Dias et al. (2016), digital technologies affect the social relationships of children, particularly the world around them. In agreement with this, digital technology provides the opportunity for millennials to learn other social skills they may have an interest in. This is the same for the celebrities interviewed. One of the celebrities interviewed was however emphatic that life will be boring.

I would be bored for maybe a few hours till I get the hang of what to do in the meantime (Celeb #6).

4.4.5   Sub-theme 1.5: Online and offline feelings

Contrary to the report by Nikken and Schols (2015) that offline activities are often more valued than online activities, it was uncovered that many of the celebrities interviewed enjoy and valued being online. Some of the participants expressed their feelings of being online as 'good' while others attributed it as offering voice and power to them.

Good as most of the time I learn something. I have customised my online platforms to usually give information (Celeb #4).

It makes me feel like I have a voice to more people than I would normally meet (Celeb #5).

It feels like I have so much power in my hands, power of reaching out to people that aren't even around (Celeb #6).

However, others stressed the importance of going offline.

Relaxing and worth it. At some point you do need some time out (Celeb #6).

Many of the celebrities prefer online activities to offline, and Marsh (2014) notes that boundaries between offline and online activities are becoming increasingly blurred.

4.5   Theme 2: Social media and Internet usage

In recent years, the Internet has evolved into an online social networking platform. Sadleir and De Beer (2015) note that Internet-based social networking sites allow individuals to

communicate personal information and causes to other individuals or groups of people they choose to be part of their online networks. This theme explores the social media and Internet usage amongst the participants. As illustrated in Table 4.5, four sub-themes emerged from the results.

4.5.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Social media platforms

According to Adebayo, Ninggal and Ajiboye (2019), the physical world is fast turning into a virtual entity. The authors attribute this to the changes in technological know-how that subsequently gave rise to the use of the Internet and different social media platforms.

4.5.1.1 Number of social media platforms

In response to the question posed to determine the number of social platforms the participants use, it was uncovered that the celebrities interviewed use on average four different platforms. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn were the common platforms mentioned. This is consistent with Sampasa-Kanyinga and Lewis (2015) that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, and Instagram have gained significant popularity amongst young people. The finding is also in consonance with Goodboy and Martin (2015) who aver that the social media sites are the most popular social networks on the Internet.

Facebook, twitter, and Instagram. If there's too many management [it] becomes an issue (Celeb #3).

Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, WhatsApp (Celeb #4).

Facebook and LinkedIn. I have dabbled in Pinterest for work, but not so much. I don't visit Twitter anymore. Instagram was too much like FB, so I dropped it personally (Celeb #5).

I am on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn (Celeb #6).

4.5.1.2 Most frequented social media platforms

When asked to state the social media platforms most frequented and the reasons why, it was uncovered that celebrities, millennials, parents, and psychologists visit different platforms.

For the celebrities, Facebook and LinkedIn were the most frequented platforms, while Facebook is used to engage audiences and LinkedIn is used for business projects.

Facebook—because practically ALL my audience are there. They love engaging and enjoying the good/humorous side of me and the news stories I post. Instagram mostly for the scenic picture stories I love to tell (Celeb #3).

Facebook and LinkedIn are to build business partnership for my business projects and to get people to participate on my projects (Celeb #4).

Facebook and LinkedIn (Celeb #5).

Apart from the above social media platforms, other social sites regularly frequented by the celebrities are Instagram and Twitter. One of the celebrities interviewed illuminated the following for using Instagram:

Instagram, I love photographs and beautiful aesthetics (Celeb #6).

Another celebrity noted that Twitter is useful for breaking news, particularly for journalism work:

Twitter for breaking news since the trend is that it has become a trusted resource for journalists (Celeb #3).

The above use of Twitter agrees with Liu, Cheung and Lee (2010) that Twitter has been used for information sharing, social interaction, information seeking, mobilisation, content and new technology gratifications.

In analysing the response extracted from the millennials, the WhatsApp platform appears to dominate the most frequented social media platform. It was uncovered that WhatsApp is used for communicating with friends and family.

WhatsApp, to communicate with friends and family that are close to me. Facebook. All my friends are on it. To see my friend's photos. To see memes. I spend about half an hour to 1hour on Facebook most of my time is on WhatsApp. LinkedIn, to find a job. Instagram, to see pictures of beautiful people and to watch funny videos (Millennial #1).

The social media platform I use daily is WhatsApp because it is the easiest and fastest way to communicate to my family, friends, and colleagues (Millennial #2).

Apart from WhatsApp, LinkedIn was mentioned as another social media platform frequented by the millennials. The reasons were largely related to finding jobs and connecting to successful individuals in the field of interest.

WhatsApp is my most frequently used social media platform because it is an easy and convenient application that enables one to connect with their family and friends. My second most used social media platform is LinkedIn as it enables me to connect with successful individuals in a similar field and find prospective jobs (Millennial #6).

LinkedIn and WhatsApp—I like the information on LinkedIn pertaining to business world, job opportunities etc. On WhatsApp it's more on communicating with friends and family and finding out what is happening in their lives (Millennial #7).

Further to the above, Instagram was frequented by millennials interested in celebrities, environmental activism, and other social activities.

I use Instagram because I follow a lot of celebrities and I want to know what is going on in their lives. I also follow environmental pages as this is something that interests me. I use WhatsApp often as I want to keep in contact with my friends and loved ones (Millennial #3).

Instagram—I like baking and they have recipes that people post looking at shipping posts it helps me know what's going on (Millennial #4).

Resonating with Alhabash and Ma (2017), it can be gathered from the above narrative that Instagram is popular amongst the millennials, as this platform can be used for self-expression and social interaction surveillance/knowledge about others, documentation, being 'cool', and creativity (Lee and Van Dolen, 2015; Sheldon and Bryant, 2016). Furthermore, Instagram allows users to take, filter, and share photos, and to make live broadcasts and create stories (Kircaburun et al., 2018).

Equally important, it emerged that WhatsApp is also popular amongst the millennials because of ease of communication. This agrees with Karapanos et al. (2016), who reveal that WhatsApp and other messaging applications make it easier for individuals to communicate more readily. Some of the millennials indicated that they frequent Facebook solely to follow the posts of friends.

I frequently use Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. I hardly post on my Facebook and Instagram, but I enjoy seeing new posts from the pages that I follow. I also enjoy using WhatsApp because it is an easy way to message friends, family, and work colleagues (Millennial #5).

Contrary to this, the millennial parents have Facebook as their most frequented social media platform, followed by WhatsApp. These platforms were visited mainly to communicate with friends and family.

I am on Facebook, especially during lock down. It is good to keep in touch with friends and to see what's going on with the people I know, and how people feel about current issues. I also use WhatsApp for its convenience in communicating (Parent #1).

Facebook, because there is a lot of information available, a lot of current issues in the world are discussed, there are a lot of groups to join like women's groups (Parent #3).

Facebook and WhatsApp. Facebook—allows me to keep in touch with stuff happening with my friends and family e.g., their birthdays. WhatsApp—is an easier faster way to communicate. Cheaper as well (Parent #4).

I do have a Facebook account to connect with family locally and internationally, also I try to keep abreast of what is transpiring in the world as to ensure healthy discussions with my students (Parent #6).

According to Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012), Facebook can be used to satisfy the need of belonging and for self-presentation. Researchers who investigated the motives for Facebook usage concluded that entertainment, self-expression, information sharing, and socialising were the main reasons (Smock et al., 2011; Alhabash, Chiang and Huang, 2014; Krause, North and Heritage, 2014). As such, one could easily assume from the findings of the present study that Facebook usage is associated with maintaining existing relationships. This may help explain its frequent usage of celebrities and parents of millennials. Added to Facebook and WhatsApp, the email service was indicated by one of the parents interviewed as a frequent social media platform where usage is work related.

Yes, email and WhatsApp. Email is used majority in the work environment and is an essential tool of the workplace. Whilst WhatsApp is an available cost effective 'cheap' and 'quick' tool of communication as compared to physically being there or calling someone telephonically. Not on any other platforms (Parent #2).

In summary, one could infer from the above narrative that for the millennials, WhatsApp and Instagram were frequented social media sites for communication and following topics of interest, whilst their parents opted for Facebook and WhatsApp to stay connected to friends and family. Reflecting on these, one could easily assume that social media platforms differ according to individual preferences and usage motives. This aligns with the findings of Kircaburun et al. (2018). Other studies (Alhabash and Ma, 2017; Khan, 2017) also reveal various motivations for the individual's use of social media, which is consistent with the findings of this study. Young (2015) as well as Kuss and Griffiths (2017) clarify that the main motives for the use of social media include establishing and maintaining online and offline relationships. In agreement with this, all the participants interviewed disclosed that the purpose of frequenting social media platforms is to connect to friends, family, and acquaintances in their fields.

4.5.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Social media posting

Kircaburun et al. (2018) attribute social media platform usage to be amongst the most popular social behaviours. Given that celebrities strive to remain relevant in the current event of social discourse, it was important to explore their social media posting behaviour.

The above narrative suggests that celebrities and millennials interviewed spent a great deal of time on social media platforms. Strekalova and Krieger (2017) maintain that social media facilitate the exchange of information with varying degrees of richness. The Seminal Theory of Information Richness proposed by Trevino, Lengel and Daft (1987) asserts that text is less rich than images while videos are considered richer than images, but the appropriate level of information richness is situation dependent. To test this theory, it becomes increasingly important to know the participants' preferred type of post. It was found that many of the celebrities and millennials interviewed prefer posting pictures with a small caption as pictures are more engaging to readers than comments or text. This may be associated with Marwick's (2015) inference that photographic proof lends credibility to pictures that text lacks.

> *I like to post with a photo, as it is seen engaged with by more readers. Pics rather than comments. For work, I try to do it every day on FB (Celeb #5).*

> *I prefer posting pictures with captions (Millennial #4).*

To put it bluntly, one of the celebrities interviewed accentuates that,

> *Nobody wants to read a thesis, so a good picture with a catchy hashtag and post works best (Celeb #3).*

One of the Millennials who noted the following reinforces the view that pictures are more engaging:

> *I enjoy commenting more on a photo. I comment on my friend's photo most of the time compared to someone I don't know (Millennial #1).*

The above finding further supports the research of Strekalova and Krieger (2017) who found that photos with short comments are most effective in engaging information. In contrast, a few of the participants (one celebrity and one millennial) said they prefer comments rather than posting pictures. The celebrity argued that people have monetised postings of pictures, particularly on popular sites such as Instagram.

Comments, showing kindness never hurt anyone. Besides people have monetised Instagram posts so those comments count as engagement so I'm not going to mess with nobody back (Celeb #2).

For the millennials, the following words were extracted for preferring comments rather than posting pictures:

I enjoy posting comments on the posts of my friends and family, more than I enjoy posting pictures (Millennial #5).

4.5.3   Sub-theme 2.3: Selfies

A critical point which emerged is that both celebrities and millennials preferred posting photos on social media platforms. Sung et al. (2016) note that photo sharing on various social medial platforms has become an important part of online social experience. According to the authors, social media users use various types of pictures including selfies with the aim of displaying their personalities, lifestyles and preference (Sung et al., 2016). Given the pervasiveness of selfie posting and the increasing academic interest in the selfie phenomenon, this sub-theme explores the question, "What motivates people to take and post selfies on social media platforms?"

4.5.3.1   Narcissism and selfie habits

Previous studies explored the relationship between posting selfies and narcissism (Sorokowski et al., 2015; Weiser, 2015). Lang and Barton (2015) and Sung et al. (2016) in their studies found that displaying socially desirable self-views is a means individual uses to manage impression, which is a behaviour found in those with high levels of narcissism. The connection existing between selfies posting and narcissism may have contributed to reports of selfie deaths. Given this concern, particularly its association with narcissism and the desire for self-inflated views, it was critical to know whether the participants think having the perfect selfies is necessary at all costs. Consistent with the view that a desire for a self-inflated image correlates with narcissism, it was uncovered that attempts for a perfect selfie, even at the jeopardy of one's life, suggest the rise of narcissism.

It is very concerning, as it shows the rise of narcissism and the need to have a perfect image all the time, which is exhausting (Celeb #5).

It is absurd. You cannot be worrying about a perfect picture while facing death. A normal person would even forget they have a phone (Celeb #6).

Many of the millennials were repulsive that people could go to such a length for a picture. According to the statements extracted from them, selfie combustive behaviour is a concern.

> *It should be a matter of concern because taking out the perfect selfie is insufficient to justify the importance of someone's life (Millennial #1).*

> *This is a huge matter of concern. People should not seek approval from others on whether they are good-looking or not. Not having the best selfie is not the end of the world (Millennial #3).*

> *No. I do not agree that is outrageous, but for some people it's like a leech latched on to their mind and getting approval from the world which can never happen because we all think and act differently (Millennial #4).*

> *It is a matter of concern! I also think that there is no such thing as 'perfect' and that people should rather strive to capture more authentic, loving, and honest moments (Millennial #5).*

> *This is a matter of concern as people need to realise that they are perfect just the way they are, and the approval of others shouldn't matter. Life is too precious to be wasting it on taking a perfect selfie without thinking of the consequences. They should always bear in mind the consequences of their death on their loved ones (Millennial #6).*

> *It is a matter of concern. The idea that you risk your life over a perfect selfie is a true indication of being negatively affected by social media (Millennial #7).*

A consistent statement emerging from the above is that those who go to an extreme for a perfect selfie do so to seek approval from others, which is akin to narcissistic behaviour. As such, one of the millennials advised that people question the rationale for posting a selfie before posting.

> *No, I believe that before posting a selfie, one needs to question if that selfie will cause that person to lose his/her dignity by revealing too much of themselves or not, and they should only post it if it does not make him/her lose their dignity (Millennial #2).*

In summary, the above narratives conclusively suggest that selfie posting is connected to narcissism. This agrees with Sung et al.'s (2016) findings that narcissism is key in explaining selfie-posting behaviour. Narcissistic tendency was also uncovered when the interviewees were asked to indicate how important it is to them for their social media post to be liked. This is illuminated in the following statement:

When I post something online, I do want people to like it. When people don't like your post, it almost feels like a rejection, especially when you've posted something personal like a piece of work. But in theory I know that this is not the case, sometimes people don't like your post because they didn't see it. So, I would say that it is relatively important for me to be liked on social media (Millennial #5).

When I post an achievement, I catch myself checking all through the day to see who responded and what they've said (Celeb #5).

The above two statements suggest narcissistic behaviour, which is self-attention seeking characteristics. According to Pirelli, Otto and Estoup (2016), narcissism is a personality disorder wherein an individual feels an extremely elevated sense of self-worth. Added to this, Millennial #3 lamented what the participants described as an attempt of attention seekers to generate likeness on social media.

I feel people portray a different image of who they are than what they are, just to be liked. They change who they are just so people will like them. People are not as perfect as they seem to be (Millennial #3).

The above also presents a picture of narcissism and aligns with Livingstone (2014) that a narcissist always insists on being first in line to grab opportunities to gain more fame and admiration. Particularly, it was uncovered that some of the participants experienced negative emotional thoughts if their post did not generate the expected attention and likeness.

I guess it's a good and bad thing to be on. So, I am now conscious, so I will employ someone soon to post for me without me having to worry who like or dislikes my posts (Celeb #1).

Yes, I do, after a while I will not feel any negative emotions after saying to myself: "I understand a good content gets lots of likes". So, I look at my content I'm putting out. And improve in the next one I post (Millennial #1).

Yes, I get anxious because I wonder how people are perceiving my post (Millennial #5).

4.6   Theme 3: Impact of social media

This theme focuses on the in impact of social media on millennials' penchant for narcissism. Due to the ever-growing presence of social media, particularly in the lives of young people, some commentators are beginning to express concern about its potential adverse effects (Berryman, Ferguson and Negy, 2018). Although social media platforms can contribute to increased enjoyment and convenience, Zheng and Lee (2016) argue that their pervasive nature can also result in excessive use and consequently may give rise several negative outcomes.

Lately, parents, policy makers and advocates of social media usage expressed concerns on the potential negative impact (Berryman, Ferguson and Negy, 2018).

This theme, therefore, explores the impact of social media usage from the perspective of celebrities, millennials, their parents, and psychologists. As illustrated in Table 4.5, several sub-themes were uncovered from the transcribed data. Figure 4.1 presents the map virtualisation showing the sub-themes extracted from the impact of social media on millennials.
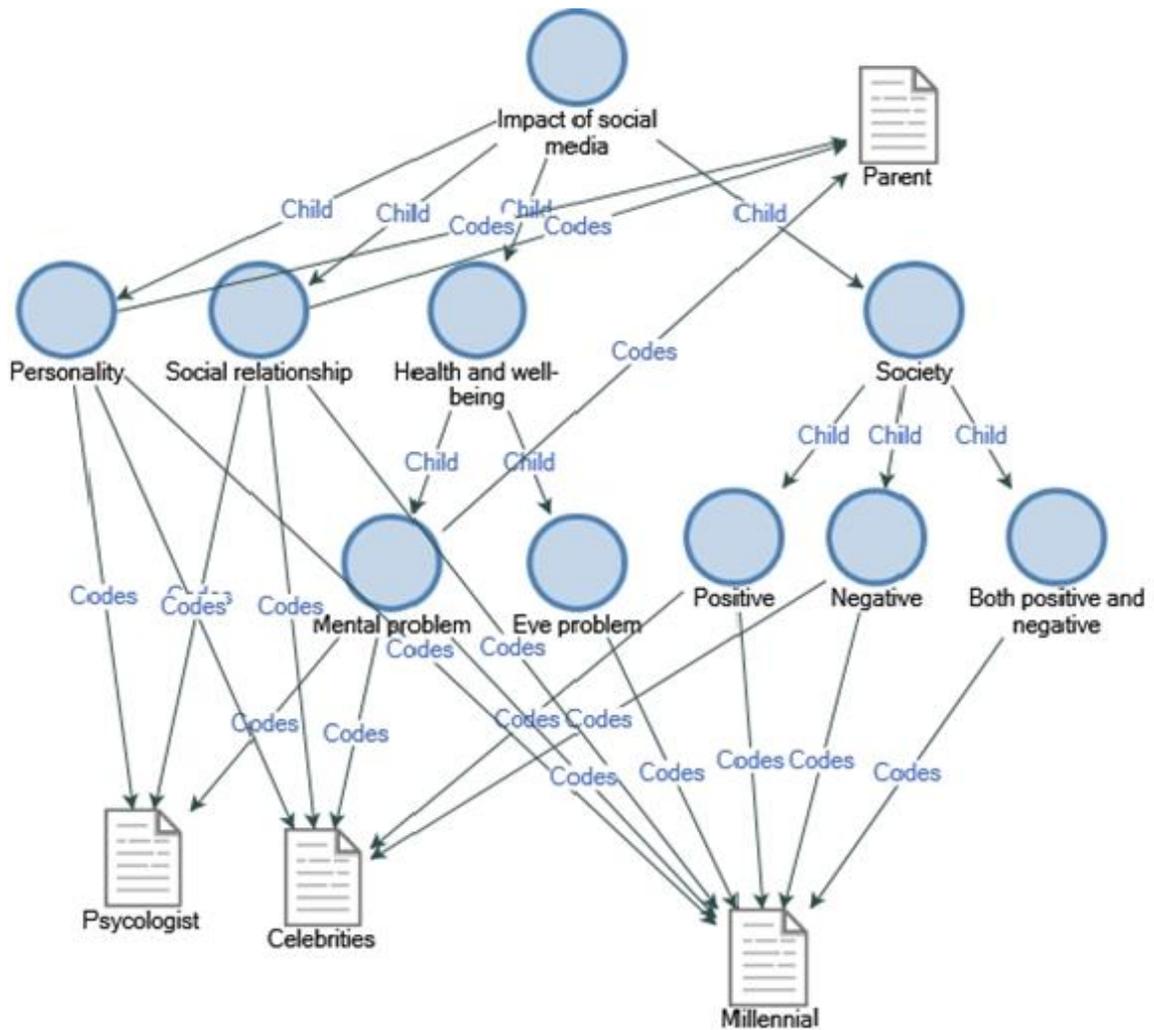
Figure 4.1: Map virtualisation showing the sub-themes extracted from the impact of social media on millennials (Source: Researcher)

4.6.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Health and well-being

4.6.1.1 Mental health

While concerns about the impact of social media on mental health have generated mixed findings in the literature, Berryman, Ferguson and Negy (2018) claim that social media use may be tied to negative mental health outcomes, including suicidality, loneliness, and decreased empathy. Consistent with this position, it was uncovered that excessive social media use may lead to mental health challenges. The researcher interviewed millennials, some of whom were celebrities.

> *I realised I do need to switch off from social media for my own sanity and regroup and get back on it as soon as business and mainly travel becomes normalised (Celeb #1).*

Particularly, it was drawn from the data analysed that excessive social media usage results in psychological conditions such as depression and anxiety.

> *I once used it for 10 hours. I felt depressed (Celeb #4).*

> *When I started, I couldn't control what to take in and what to leave behind and that triggered my anxiety (Celeb #6).*

> *My son began subscribing to TikTok and it really affected his focus, attitude, and moods. We have now restricted him to only a few hours one day a week (Celeb #5).*

The above findings agree with Amedie (2015) that depression is one of the inadvertent consequences of excessive social media usage. While it is understandable that seeking acceptance and staying connected with peers is an important element of social life, it is noted in the literature that the intensity of the online world, which requires constant engagement, creates a factor of self-awareness that may trigger depression in some people (Amedie, 2015). Corroborating further, one of the millennials revealed the following:

> *I know of many people who seek approval from others on social media. They get offended if people do not like their pictures or if they do not get a certain number of likes on a picture. They become depressed and let it affect their personal life. They feel they aren't beautiful enough. They also see other girl's pictures and wish they looked like that instead of being happy with the way they are (Millennial #3).*

Adding to the above, one of the parents of the millennials accentuated that their child suffers from anxiousness due to social media expectation, which, consequently, led to the child experiencing health issues and a depressive mood.

> *Yes, I have noticed my son is very forgetful, also rather anxious if he does not get messages from his friends, which is of concern. He often gets headaches and appears moody so I sometimes questions are this related to him being so obsessed with his digital gadgets (Parent #6).*

The above statement reinforces the observation of prominent psychologists (Starr and Davilla, 2009) that texting, instant messaging, and social networking make it very easy for adolescents to become overly self-conscious and anxious, which subsequently result in depression.

Two of the parents interviewed illuminated the following:

> *Yes, it has. People seem to feel worthless and more depressed (Parent #5).*

> *Yes, being on social media can leave you tired, it makes you forgetful, its time consuming that you even forget to eat; you are isolating yourself by being on social media. It can also have an impact on one's mental health (Parent #3).*

According to Becker, Alzahabi and Hopwood (2013), excessive social media usage leaves one prone to be at a higher risk of depression, anxiety, and ultimately stress. Amedie (2015) concurs with this by revealing that the continuous stress from constantly using social media results in the constant release of the stress hormone cortisol. This, in turn, leads to depression and anxiety. To remediate this concern, one of the celebrities withdrew from social media use as a means of protecting his/her health.

> *With Covid-19 happening this year, I found myself having a break from social media which in a way indirectly gave my health a break as I was experiencing some ill health from last December 2019 (Celeb #1).*

The above view is highly supported by Pitts (2012) who contends that turning off all media devices and tuning out of cultural media messages from time to time may help reduce the frequency of depressive symptoms experienced by adolescents. In summary, the direct implication of excessive social media usage on mental health may be so far overarching that it has become a global concern. As a testament to this, another celebrity interviewed averred that online networking sites such Google designed an application to help address issues of health related to social media use.

Yes, to show the seriousness of this, Google has even designed an application to address the health issue. The application is called Digital Well-being. It helps people to block the use of application at certain time (Celeb #4).

4.6.1.2 Eyesight and ergonomics

Apart from the documented mental health problems associated with the excessive use of social media, eye problems were uncovered as another health problem caused by social media usage.

I have experienced the physical impacts of being online for long hours, my eyesight often gets a bit blurry after staring at a screen for long hours, my posture is not aligned, and I don't feel energised (Millennial #5).

I can imagine the challenges with eyesight's if people stare at social media platforms the whole day (Millennial #7).

Yeah, I guess you stay in house all day do not want to get out also your eyesight can deteriorate (Millennial #4).

The above findings echo the sentiments of Zheng and Lee (2016) that devoting an excessive amount of time interacting with technology may cause health problems such as eyestrain, backaches, carpal tunnel syndrome, and chronic sleep deprivation. Of significance, it emerged that the connection of social media usage and eyesight challenges were only mentioned by millennials. This may be connected to millennials accessing social media mainly through their mobile phones. According to Zheng and Lee (2016), students craving to use mobile social media platforms are likely to check for updates or information during class, which may result in discomfort in their necks, eyes, and fingers (i.e. ergonomics, noting how people work in their environment). Particularly, and from a psychological perspective, it was uncovered that:

Long hours spent online, resulting in being hunched over your phone, laptop etc. can have a detrimental effect on your posture and eyesight. Joint pains come to mind with the constant typing. A sedentary lifestyle has health implications whereas there is not much mobility or exercises can lead to increased weight, changes in sleep patterns etc. (Psychologist #2).

It is reported in literature that individuals suffering from eyestrain or backache stayed up late using mobile social media platforms (Zheng and Lee, 2016). This may be another plausible explanation why only the millennials alluded to eyesight problems using social media, as this group of people is prone to using social media until late at night.

4.6.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Social relationship

As stated earlier, social media play a vital role in transforming people's lifestyle. Particularly, social media have become relatively inexpensive and widely accessible tools, enabling anyone to access, collaborate, publish, and even build relationships (Siddiqui and Singh, 2016). However, social media commenters have queried if reliance on social media for social interactions influences real-life social contacts (Berryman, Ferguson and Negy, 2018).

Of particular interest, previous studies proposed that social media have a range of effects on the development of social relationships (Gianesini and Brighi, 2015; Abar et al., 2018). These scholars are, however, divided as to what effect social media has on social development. Abar et al. (2018) propose that social media have some degree of positive influence on the development of social relationships. Gianesini and Brighi (2015) however take a different stance by noting that social media negatively influence the development of social relationships.

This sub-theme adds to the debate by exploring the interaction that exists between social media and social relationship. From the data analysed, it was uncovered that social media have both a positive and negative influence on the social relationships of the participants interviewed. For instance, it was noted that many celebrities lost their voice due to online bullying. This may be interpreted as a negative influence of a social relationship with their followers.

> *Plenty of influencers have expressed their newly found stutters, others don't even speak on their videos because of the online bullying they were subjected to due to their accents (Celeb #2).*

Equally, some of the parents interviewed pointed to the lack of physical socialising with their kids. The dearth of physical interactions was blamed on the excessive use of mobile phones.

> *Yes, it has. My kids no longer socialise with us. They are most of their time on their phones. My kids [are] not receiving the love and affection that they need to feel from us. Most of the time we are staring at television and phone screens over meals, rather than talking to one another (Parent #4).*

> *Children do not communicate with adults, there is no control, days of communicating face-to-face are over (Parent #3).*

Another negative consequence of social media on a social relationship is addiction.

Yes, it has become a priority to the millennials in the sense that this has become an integral part of my son's life. He cannot wake up without looking at his WhatsApp messages and can be non-communicative verbally for hours (Parent #6).

Another parent interviewed linked social media addiction to children's bad behaviour and disobedience. In the parent's own words:

Getting the children off their phones. They don't obey parents anymore. They think they know it all (Parent #5).

Yet another parent reinforced the above view, stating particularly disobedient behaviour of children towards their parents.

The biggest challenge I face all the time with my kids is the fact that they have become very lazy, they rebel easily and if I happen to say anything they first need to go to Google to see if I am correct. Everything is GOOGLE!!! (Parent #4).

Studies that investigated the relationship between social media usage motives and social media addiction suggest that entertainment, diversion, and self-presentation, seeking friendship, relationship maintenance, and escapism motives and gratifications are associated with social media addiction and more frequent use (Huang, 2011; Chen and Kim, 2013; Floros and Siomos, 2013; Koc and Gulyagci, 2013). Hence, one could presumably conclude that social relationships formed on social media cause addiction and should be a concern. One of the psychologists interviewed shared the following sentiment:

Yes. Millennials have become out of touch with many aspects of daily mundane [life] and more preoccupied with social media. Many teens have lost themselves to succumb to societal norms and expectations of society (Psychologist #4).

In support of the negative influence of social media on social relationships, two of the psychologists had this to say:

It takes them away from the reality. Too much time spent on smartphones. Impact on lifestyle, exercise, communication with baby boomer and parents, sedentary lifestyles, cyber bullying, criminal activity. Limited accountability to parents and employers. Social isolation, mental health problems, poor social etiquette, and skills (Psychologist #2).

My colleges have observed that there is an increase in the breakdown of family time with the use of technology. Where family interaction is limited. People are sitting on their devices like laptops, phones etc. and watching, marriage breakups due to the addictions to pornography, easily accessible online 'hook-ups' etc. I cannot quote you statistics (Psychologist #3).

The above narrative further illuminates the negative influence of social media. It can be inferred that there are several consequences of social media usage. Added to this, another psychologist interviewed pointed out that the traditional family structure suffers because of changes in their kids' habits from social media usage.

Many black traditional families struggle to come to terms with the changes that they see on the younger generation allegedly due to media. This also includes confusion due to the younger generation's sexual orientation and dress code. There are so many families who struggle with psychosocial stressors and the management of this. They also are paralysed with regards to coping mechanisms and not seeking assistance (Psychologist #4).

Despite the above, it was extracted from the analysed data that social media also presented a positive influence on the life of the millennials.

Yes, because I rely on it to be in contact with people and if it did not exist, keeping a good relationship with family and friends would be difficult (Millennial #2).

One of the parents interviewed concurred with the above view by noting that millennials now have access to information, which changes how they socially interact.

Yes, millennials have more access to information, and socially it has changed how children interact (Parent #3).

The above findings agree with Amedie (2015) that social media enable people to exchange ideas, connect with, relate to, and mobilise for a cause, seek advice, and offer guidance. Particularly, social media foster creativity and collaboration with a wide range of commentators on several issues such as education, the economy, politics, race, health, and relationships. Two of the psychologists interviewed also expressed a similar opinion:

Positively, marriage partners, timeous, helps millennials to look at things through different lenses. Easy access to material, build relationships and they also become more brand aware and keep up to date with benchmarks and trends (Psychologist #2).

Socially it allows them to feel part of a bigger community and they are not alone. Rural communities are now connected to the rest of the country. That is of course if they have access to technology. It expands their community (Psychologist #3).

4.6.3   Sub-theme 3.3: Society

It is reasonable to infer that social media has an enormous impact on our society, albeit both positive and negative. It is imperative to note that many of the social media platforms have

transformed the way people communicate and socialise on the Internet. More so, social media platforms render the opportunity for people to reconnect with their old friends, colleagues and mates (Siddiqui and Singh, 2016: 71). Added to this, social media has helped people to make new friends and share content, pictures, audios and videos amongst them. Hence, it will not be premature to say that social media has changed the life style of our society. This sub-theme further adds to the dimensions of the impact of social media by exploring its influence in society. Like its influence on a social relationship, it has been uncovered that the impact of social media on society could be negative or positive.

4.6.3.1 *Negative impacts of social media use on society*

While it is generally accepted that social media foster relationships and help bridge the global divide, it was uncovered that digital interaction is a poor substitute for real friends. The consequence of this may result in depression and poor self-worth.

> *Negative, in that it isolates you while deceiving you into thinking that you are really connecting. It is a poor substitute for real friends and is also deceptive in that it shows the highlight reel of your life, instead of all the ups and downs. It can make you depressed when you see all the holidays, achievements and successes of other people on a daily basis, or when you get sucked into fake news, or when you are trolled. It can become an obsession with getting people you don't even know to like you and your views. It can affect your self-worth, in that you are affected if people don't respond positively to what you have posted. It can lead to bullying or abuse/stalking (Celeb #5).*

Narrating further, Celeb #5 revealed how the sister was stalked by a guy she knew until she had to totally go off social media for six months and return under a different name. This revelation gives further validity to the negative consequences and vices perpetuated on social media platforms. Amedie (2015) attributes this to the increase in social media usage. According to the author's report, malicious and irresponsible people benefit from the freedom of social medial platforms to perform heinous crimes such as cyber bullying, scams, and hurting other people. The shared concern of cyber bullying and stalking does more harm to the victims. One of the psychologists interviewed shared the following sentiment:

> *I'm concerned about issues about cyber bulling, child protection, we need to think about being safe online (Psychologist #6).*

Supporting the above statement, particularly with respect to lying on social media, it was uncovered that many people live a fake lifestyle.

Definitely because the persona behind the profile is rarely the person themselves, Instagram has always been a lifestyle up. People have just started looking to other lifestyles besides their own (Celeb #2).

Social media has played negative role in society because a lot of people live fake life because of it. People turn to do wrong things because of social media because everyone wants to look good in other people's eyes. So social media allows people to live fake life (Millennia 9).

The above findings are in agreement with Amedie (2015) who notes that superficial connections on social media platforms could end up causing long-term emotional and psychological problems. The experience of false intimacy leads to depression, which is a consequence of false lifestyles and over-bloated accomplishments (Amedie, 2015). Added to this, another celebrity interviewed revealed the existence of an engineered attempt by social media companies to create addictive behaviour amongst users. What is most astounding in the statement extracted from the interview was that these companies hire psychologists and neurologists to achieve this addiction.

Negative, Social Media companies make more money from keep users glued on their platform. The more time the user spent on the platform the more ads are sold. They hire psychologist and neurologist to develop addictive techniques that turn into algorithm to glue me on their Platform (Celeb #4).

The above revelation of a concocted attempt to create addictive behaviour supports the assertion of Siddiqui and Singh (2016) who note that social media make people addicted. The authors report that people spend a large amount of time on social media platforms, which can divert the concentration and focus from the particular task. One of the parents interviewed shared this concern:

For younger children, it impacts negatively as they spend too much time playing games like on PlayStation, there is no time boundary, they lose interest in school work and can exhibit anger if they are asked to stop playing, there can also be incidents of cyberbullying on online gaming platforms, which can affect a child's mental health (Parent #3).

The mentioned addictive behaviour and associated conflicts could be explained using the Social Cognitive Theory. According to this theory, when users of pervasive mobile social media react to their environment (e.g., social relationships with family, friends, and colleagues), their behaviours (excessive use of mobile social media in inappropriate situations) affect the people (deficient self-regulation) and environment (conflicts with family,

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friends, and colleagues) (Zheng and Lee, 2016: 73). These social conflicts may be connected to what the psychologist noted as indoctrination of children on social media.

> *Social media has become a vehicle of indoctrination for many negative dilemmas and has exposed young people to a world of convenience but also exposed the young people to negative content in the form of music videos, TV shows etc. (Psychologist #4).*

4.6.3.2   Positive impacts of social media use on society

Despite the negative influence of social media, it has numerous benefits and usefulness. According to Siddiqui and Singh (2016), social media provide awareness amongst society, for example, campaigns, advertisement articles, and promotions that help people to be up to date with the current information. A classic example of this is the *fees must fall* campaign. One of the celebrities interviewed noted that through social media, citizens could hold their government and businesses accountable.

> *Normal citizens now hold entities like government and businesses accountable. E.g. Hashtag like #ClicksMustFall #VotsekANC (Lead President to read one letter). This entity previously used to have power to control message on media. Also Social Media has created more job for youth. According to Business Insider businesses will be spent $ 15 billion in 2022 in social media influencers (Celeb #4).*

The above position was also uncovered from an interview with two of the millennials who believe that social media made it easier to disseminate information and garner community support for pressing issues.

> *We have become a global community; we can communicate with each other so much easier and have free speech to discuss matters that are unjust (Millennial #5).*

> *Quick way to get info like: burning news etc. Fast travelling (interact with internationals on the go). Vast information sharing (Millennial #7).*

Equally significant, it can be extracted that social media have helped to create jobs for the youth, who are mostly social media influencers. This is reinforced by the statements below:

> *Well, I feel it has a real positive effect as it can really brand someone like me who is in the business of show business. I have gained more business opportunities purely by posts on Facebook, media coverage and tweeting and retweeting by followers and media houses, so I cannot complain but embrace the attention I as a brand can get for my business (Celeb #1).*

A positive role because businesses are trending easily these days than before through social media and it is much easier to find a job now through seeing a post on the social media posts. With social networks we are able to communicate our thoughts and perceptions over different topics with a large number of audiences and raise our voice (Millennial 8).

The use of social media for brand promoting and marketing of business further cements its positive benefits. Amedie (2015: 5) reveals an exponential user growth in social media, thus, companies use this platform for product marketing through advertising, where they promote brands, discuss features, and create awareness.

Another important positive influence of social media to the society is the ability to connect and bring the world together. Amedie (2015) notes that social media allow us to easily connect with friends and family around the globe, thereby breaking down international borders and cultural barriers. Consistent with this, one of the celebrities accentuated that the social media contribution to the society has been positive. In the celebrity's own words:

Positive, in that it connects you with friends and family no matter where they are. It is also a great platform to promote your business or find interests or input/feedback on your work. It is also great to see the 'mood on the ground' on certain issues in society (Celeb #3).

A similar position was extracted from the statements of the millennials interviewed.

People can communicate faster and more efficient with one and other. We'll know each another's whereabouts. We can learn new things. We can find inspiration. We can get to know someone better. We can communicate with anyone in the world (Millennia #1).

Social media allows you to communicate with family and friends, meet new people, access educational sites and keep updated with the news (Millennial 6).

Siddiqui and Singh (2016) note that social media unite people on a huge platform for the achievement of specific goals, thus brining positive change in society. The importance of this is reflected in the statement made by one of the psychologists interviewed:

On the positive side following positive role models can be encouraging for this age group to strive, to better themselves and to be strong. That they can overcome adversity and reach their dreams. For some adults who are shy they can improve their social life by being on these platforms and increase the number of friends/acquaintances that they have. It can provide online support groups. They can socialise with strangers who do not know them (Psychologist #3).

Added to this, it is reported in literature that through social media, users are empowered by the unrestricted flow of information to add to their knowledge bank (Amedie, 2015). A similar position was extracted in the interview with another millennium and one of the parents who shared the following:

> *Due to social media, we are able to educate ourselves on current issues, globally and locally. If used for the correct purposes, we are able to create awareness about environmental issues such as climate change. Platforms such as Instagram are great as we can actually donate money to a worthy cause (Millennial #3).*

> *The positive impact of social media is the information you have access to, information that you use for learning which can advance your cognitive ability (Parent #3).*

The above narrative of the influence social media has on society and individuals has been clouded with mixed opinions. Arguments for and against the benefits of social media have been fully explored and presented. It was drawn from the narrative that while social media have benefits, particularly in bringing pressing issues quickly to the public's attention and generating public reactions, it also comes with a price, which includes false lifestyles, cyber bulling, and fake friendships, amongst others. However, one of the parents interviewed voiced the following:

> *I think the structure and foundation set impacts the development of the child. The environment also influences the character of the child. Social media has had a positive impact on those who were raised to respect and value, not only themselves but all those around them. Those negatively affected by social media had pre-existing factors that contributed to their 'destruction'. In this case social media has accelerated or compounded their problems (Parent #1).*

From the above comments, one could infer that poor upbringing in real life may be transferred to the virtual world of social media, which invariable worsens whilst using the platforms.

4.6.4   Sub-theme 3.4: Personality

It has been hinted in literature that individual personality traits may influence the problematic use of social media (Kircaburun et al., 2018). Given some of the pervasive social behaviour noted amongst some of the participants, particularly the celebrities and millennials, it became vital to explore whether their identified personality traits are somewhat connected to social media habits.

It was uncovered that many of the millennials interviewed identified as introvert or the combination of introvert and extrovert, while few identified as extrovert. Amongst those who

identified as being introvert, it was found that the millennials interviewed dominated while only one celebrity identified as being introvert. In terms of the characteristics displayed by the introverts, it was uncovered that they love being by themselves and take much to reading.

> *Introvert. I love being by myself, but I also enjoy hearing and reading good news and stories about other people. I regard people as my family and believe in the Sanskrit saying Vasudaiva Kuttumbakkam – the whole world is my family. At work I call all my fans and audience members my Family (Celeb #3).*

Equally, many of the participants who identified as being introverts noted they have only a few (groups of) friends.

> *Introvert, I keep to myself, and I don't talk to many people (Millennial #1).*

> *I am an introvert because I lead a private life and I have a small group of people that I thoroughly enjoy being around (Millennial #2).*

> *I would describe myself as an introvert. I am quiet until I feel comfortable around someone. I don't crave attention and I am a very reliable person (Millennial #3).*

> *I am a bold introvert. I prefer spending time alone as I can recollect my thoughts and look back on how far I've come and how much I've grown. Furthermore, I am a quiet person and not one to talk much but I am not shy (Millennial #6).*

The characteristics of introverts, particularly their tendency to be alone with fewer friends, suggest that they compensate real friendship for virtual relationship, thereby increasing their excessive social media usage. This is agreement with Kircaburun et al.'s (2018) claim that introverts were more likely to use social media problematically. Their desire to be alone and limited friendships may be connected to their self-esteem. This corroborates with Erdle et al. (2009) who explain that introverts have lower self-esteem, which, in turn, may be connected to introverts being mostly alone. Extroverts, by contrast, are highly sociable.

> *Extrovert, I like to entertain people when we are in a group (Celeb #4).*

> *Extrovert, I can interact by any forms of communication (Millennial #4).*

The above-mentioned personality traits of extroverts may be associated with their higher usage of social media. Several studies found that extroverts have a higher number of general and actual friends and group memberships (Bachrach et al., 2012; Moore and McElroy, 2012; Kim and Chock, 2017). As such, they post more status updates and selfies (Bachrach et al., 2012; Sorokowska et al., 2016), and are more active on social media by posting more

comments and likes, and demonstrate greater self-disclosure (Choi et al., 2017). Nevertheless, some of the participants claimed to possess the characteristics of both introvert and extrovert.

> *I think I am a combination of both. Most of the time I am more reserved and tend to isolate myself. However, there are also times when I become more sociable and livelier (Millennial #5).*

> *A bit of both, amongst friends I am an extrovert, but in areas where I am not familiar with the group, I am an introvert (Millennial #7).*

> *I am a bit of both. I write better than I speak, but I have been forced to come out of my shell in my work position. I can be quiet most of the time, but vivacious at functions/events (Celeb #5).*

In summary, an individual' personality may play an active role in the way and manner they engaged with social media. For instance, while an extrovert is noted to have higher levels of social activity, introverts, on the other hand, engage in more problematic usage. Kircaburun et al. (2018) uncovered that despite the excessive amount of time introverts spend on social media, they do not share many selfies or status updates. The authors attribute this to an attempt to avoid negative comments, which is a way of preserving their level of self-esteem (Kircaburun et al., 2018).

4.7   Theme 4: Social influencers

Social media influencers represent a new type of independent, third-party endorsers who shape audiences' attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media channels (Van Ouytsel et al., 2015). Peter and Valkenburg (2014b) assert that influencers are individuals who have found their fame in the online space and amassed huge audiences. Given their influence in the social media space, it has become necessary to explore the role influencers play, particularly on their followers.

4.7.1   Sub-theme 4.1: Direct and indirect impact

Wagner, Aguirre and Sumner (2016) assert that brand influencers are ordinary people active in a brand's social media communities, who unknowingly carry the velocity and impact of conversation. Their natural passion for the brand or topic draws attention from others and their influence grows depending on their activity. In this study, it was uncovered that social media influencers have a profound influence on their followers. This may help explain their importance in the digital age.

Indirect. What they say and what they do is often mimicked by people but also encourages people to speak out on certain issues they would normally not pay attention to like the GBV trends now (Celeb #3).

Yes, through their different arts (e.g., music message) (Celeb #4).

They are not called influencers for nothing, and businesses don't pay them to be influencers for nothing either. They tend to the 'word of mouth' in a digital age that people tend to trust over overt advertising (Celeb #5).

Mostly indirect. People tend to get inspired by people they admire the most and they end up doing just like them (Celeb #6).

As an influencer myself, yes, I do. Because people engage with the PROMOTED / ADVERTISED posts I serve up (Celeb #2).

Overall, it can be deduced that while influencers might not be skilled professional journalists or commentators, people listen when they have something to say, their followers most of all.

4.7.2   Sub-theme 4.2: Importance of followers

A critical point is that social influencers engage in promotions and public campaigns. This is achieved through sites such as Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, which enable them to create content by promoting certain brands with the goal of obtaining a following and brand recognition. When asked how important followers are to social influencers, it was uncovered that followers are critical as it gives influencers the platforms and credibility to spread their influence.

So that your content gets spread far and wide (Celeb #3).

Very important, it boosts your brand. When people look at number of followers, they trust your brand (Celeb #4).

It's extremely important if you have a business. It's the modern-day advertising (Celeb #5).

4.7.3   Sub-theme 4.3: Preferred type of followers

Understandably, many of the celebrities indicated that they prefer local followers to international followers.

Local fans are the best because this is my audience (Celeb #3).

Local, my business is focused on addressing local problems (Celeb #4).

For my company, local is better, as it is easier to control the relationship, but for authors, it is better to have both, as you will then sell more books (Celeb #5).

I would like to interact with anyone from anywhere, it would be more meaningful that way (Celeb #6).

4.7.4 Sub-theme 4.4: Need for more followers

According to Ledbetter et al. (2011), the success of social media influencers is vitally important to brands. Hence, many influencers are judged by the number of hits on a blog, times a blog is shared, likes and comments, and followers. Consistent with Chang and Tsang's (2011) findings, the number of social media followers becomes highly critical to social media influencers' success. Micro-influencers generally have between 5,000 and 50,000 followers, while brand influencers might only have several hundred focused, loyal followers. In this study, the data extracted from the interviews with the celebrities suggest that their minimum number of followers was 700 and the maximum 15,000 (Weiser, 2015).

FB about 5000 friends + 3000 followers, Instagram about 2000 followers and Twitter about 6000 followers (Celeb #3).

Facebook – 2000, Instagram – 400, LinkedIn – 2000 (Celeb #4).

Just under 700 on LinkedIn (Celeb #5).

In Total, close to 15 000 (Celeb #6).

Drawing from the above, it is reasonable to infer that many of the celebrities interviewed are micro influencers. Hence, it was not surprising to find out that some of the celebrities needed more followers to increase their brand engagement.

The more the followers mean more support and strength my brand and making it more investable (Celeb #4).

When I self-publish, I am going to need to build a following on my blog to draw people to buy my books (Celeb #5).

I would choose to have; I want to reach out to more people (Celeb #6).

4.7.5 Sub-theme 4.5: Benefits of social media for artists

4.7.5.1 Direct and indirect impacts

Wagner, Aguirre and Sumner (2016: 45) assert that brand influencers are ordinary people who are active in a brand's social media communities, who unknowingly carry the velocity and impact of conversation. Their natural passion for the brand or topic draws attention from others and their influence grows depending on their activity. In this study, it was uncovered that social media influencers have a profound influence on their followers. This, perhaps, could help explain their importance in the digital age.

> *Indirect. What they say and what they do is often mimicked by people but also encourages people to speak out on certain issues they would normally not pay attention to like the GBV trends now (Celeb #3).*

> *Yes, through their different arts (e.g. music message) (Celeb #4).*

> *They are not called influencers for nothing, and businesses don't pay them to be influencers for nothing either. They tend to the 'word of mouth' in a digital age that people tend to trust over overt advertising (Celeb #5).*

> *Mostly indirect. People tend to get inspired by people they admire the most and they end up doing just like them (Celeb #6).*

> *As an influencer myself, yes I do. Because people actually engage with the PROMOTED / ADVERTISED posts I serve up (Celeb #2).*

Overall, it can be deduced that while influencers might not be skilled professional journalists or commentators, people listen when they have something to say, their followers most of all.

4.7.5.2 Importance of followers

A critical point emerging from 4.7.5.1 is that social influencers engage with promotions and public campaigns. This is achieved through sites like Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, which enables them to create content promoting certain brands with the goal of obtaining a following and brand recognition.

When asked how important followers are to social influencers, it was uncovered that followers are critical as it gives influencers the platforms and credibility to spread their influence.

> *So that your content gets spread far and wide (Celeb #3).*

Very important it boost your brand. When people look at the number of followers they trust your brand (Celeb #4).

It's extremely important if you have a business. It's the modern-day advertising (Celeb #5).

4.7.5.3 Preferred type of followers

Understandably, many of the celebrities indicated that they prefer local followers to international followers.

Local fans are the best because this is my audience (Celeb #3).

Local my business is focused on addressing local problems (Celeb #4).

For my company, local is better, as it is easier to control the relationship, but for authors, it is better to have both, as you will then sell more books (Celeb #5).

I would like to interact with anyone from anywhere, it would be more meaningful that way (Celeb #6).

4.7.5.4 Need for more followers

According to Ledbetter et al. (2011: 34), the success of social media influencers is vitally important to brands. Hence, many influences are judged by the number of hits on a blog, number of times a blog is shared, likes and comments, and followers. Consistent with Chang and Tsang (2014: 56) the number of social media followers becomes highly critical for social media influencers' success.

Weiser (2015: 45) suggests that micro-influencers generally have between 5,000 and 50,000 followers, while brand influencers might only have several hundred focused, loyal followers. In this study, the data extracted from the interviews with the celebrities suggest that the minimum was 700 and the maximum was about 15,000 followers.

FB about 5000 friends + 3000 followers, Instagram about 2000 followers and Twitter about 6000 followers (Celeb #3).

Facebook – 2000, Instagram – 400, LinkedIn – 2000 (Celeb #4).

Just under 700 on LinkedIn (Celeb #5).

In Total, close to 15 000 (Celeb #6).

Drawing from the above, it is reasonable to infer that many of the celebrities interviewed are micro influencers. Hence, it was not surprising to find out that some of the celebrities need more followers to increase their brand engagement.

> *The more the followers mean more support and strength my brand and making it more investable (Celeb #4).*

> *When I self-publish, I am going to need to build a following on my blog to draw people to buy my books (Celeb #5).*

> *I would choose to have; I want to reach out to more people (Celeb #6).*

4.7.5.5 Benefits of social media for artists

Particularly, for social media influencers, social media have benefitted their business. This is reflected in the statements below.

> *As a business, yes, but on a smaller scale, no. Personally, I think a small business needs to use SM as a platform to advertise their skills, expertise and services, and show a 'human side' to their business (Celeb #5).*

> *I doubt I would have been one because social media was my breakthrough (Celeb #6).*

4.8   Theme 5: Impact of Covid-19

4.8.1   Sub-theme 5.1: Relationship with others

Among the negative influences of social media and digital technologies uncovered in this study was the effect it has on social relationships. It emerged that while Covid-19 placed a strain on the family structure, it also created a new form of reliance on virtual contact.

> *Due to Covid-19, the current lockdown has increased the reliance of virtual contact. People are now legally bound to stay indoors with minimum exposure outside of their homes. As a result, individuals are separated from their families and their loved ones. The virtual world provides a platform to interact with their loved ones. Technology has increased contact through the means of a virtual platform. This decreases their isolation and loneliness. The work environment has changed as well. Corporates are increasing their use of the virtual platform. Globally emergency and essential personal have been using the virtual platform to keep in touch with their patients to continue to administer care. Psychologists are undertaking the same allowing for ongoing care and continued support during this pandemic (Psychologist #3).*

I would say that Covid-19 has taught us to turn to digital platforms on social media to meet our communication and social needs because we are social be beings. Quite literally we need to be in constant communication with other people and identify on a social level. I think in that sense it has provided a lot of utility in this context, by providing to be able to meet with friends and family digitally which is not the face-to face we would be used to do so. At the same time, I think we do lose out on a lot of the human or personal nature of that contact. For me, having a Zoom call with my grandparents is nowhere near having a cup of tea with them face-to-face (Psychologist #6).

4.8.2 Sub-theme 5.2: Followership

For the social influencers, it was uncovered that social media surprisingly increased their followership. This may be connected to many people now turning to social media to seek for trends and events.

Steady, since everyone has been on their phones. Social media consumes you as much as you allow it too—what works for me is muting Apps and opening messages when I open the app to deter being a slave to the internet. You can't live at the rate of SM—therefore integrate it into your life (Celeb #1).

Wow. It has boomed. The lockdown for Covid-19 has proved that there are HUGE social media audiences that we as multi-platform broadcast corporations and newsrooms MUST tap into. There's money to be made there (Celeb #3).

Increased. I was forced to do virtual events, so it leads to doing engaged content (Celeb #4).

It has done both. People have vented and been desperate for info, and have also retreated into their shells, depending on how they have dealt with the lockdown. Sometimes the sheer dearth of information has been overwhelming that I've felt like retreating and having a break (Celeb #5).

One of the psychologists interviewed warned that Covid-19 brought about addictive behaviour.

Now with Covid-19, we have had a lot of social media binging, where people sit and use social media. It has created addictive behaviour in some people. During Covid-19, people have used social media to stay in contact with others (Psychologist #1).

4.9 Summary of main themes

In summary, this chapter exhaustively explored the benefits and negative consequences of social media from the perspective of celebrities, millennials, parents, and psychologists. Through the lenses of each group of participants, five themes were extracted.

In the first theme, the impact of digital technology on the participants was extensively discussed. It was uncovered that digital technology had both positive and negative impacts on communication skills. Due to the negative consequence of digital technology, particularly how it affects social communication, some of the parents called for control of social media usage. However, many of the millennials interviewed felt that life would be non-existing and boring without digital technology.

In theme 2, social media and Internet usage were explored. The most common social media platforms and the reasons for their usage were presented. It was uncovered that millennials prefers WhatsApp because of the ease of communication, while their parents seemed to prefer Facebook to maintain existing relationships with friends. For the celebrities, LinkedIn was particularly popular. On average, many of the participants posted on social media twice a week while selfies posting was not very common, although some noted to post selfies, particularly when they looked good.

Theme 3 explored the impact of social media on the participants. It was uncovered that social media negatively impacted on health and wellbeing, particularly mental health, and eyesight. Added to this, it was uncovered that while social media usage negatively affected social relationships, it also improved the confidence of some of the millennials that were interviewed. For society, social media had given a voice to ordinary people and helped bridge communication divides.

Theme 4 explored the impact of social influencers on their followers. It was uncovered that social influencers have both a direct and indirect influence, as many of their followers imitate and listen to their opinion. Their influence is also felt on brand promotion and advertisement. Hence, some of the celebrities interviewed desired more followers to able to reach out to a larger audience.

Theme 5 discussed the impact of Covid-19 on social media. It was uncovered that followership on social media for the celebrities has increased exponentially. This could be attributed to the lockdown and the desire for people to seek for information. However, it was also noted that Covid-19 brought about a new form of social media addiction.

4.10 Importance of this study

The importance of the study may be quantitatively inferred by the nine media publications that published the researcher's public commentary on digital narcissism on two consecutive

days of 2019 (Peters and Thakur, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2019e, 2019f, 2019g). The readership was stated to be 951 345 by print media consultants. This is a significant readership in the Internet era.

4.11 Summary

In summary, the chapter discussed the data findings and results based on the responses of four sets of participants. The analysis of the data obtained from the open-ended questions resulted in the identification of themes and sub-themes in line with answering the research questions and achieving the research objectives. The findings indicate that extensive use of digital media might lead to narcissistic tendencies amongst users; however, participants cannot simply be 'diagnosed' one way or the other in this study based on their responses.

Participants in the study indicated that although social media anonymity gives them some form of 'confidence' and the freedom to air their views, they nonetheless sometimes feel very isolated as they seem to live in a bubble. Time spent online is often equated to social time, albeit wrongly. Thus, most participants said that although they feel a momentary feeling of importance when they interact online, it often dissipates into feelings of loneliness when the realities of their 'aloneness' dawn.

Some participants however posited that online 'acceptance' from total strangers at times gives them the feeling of self-obsession and narcissism as they often feel no need for human interactions. The commitment, trust, communication, and humility often required in human interactions seem like chores to them, so they keep to online validations.

An interesting finding was participants' attention to selfies and how it often leads to subtle narcissism. Some interviewed millennials averred that they feel 'either good or bad' about themselves and even about their days, depending on the reactions they receive when they post their selfies. When they do not get likes and retweets, they often feel deflated. They spend a sizeable part of their day continuously checking to see who liked or retweeted their posts. They can often be seen screen grabbing their posts and reposting these as their WhatsApp status if the post receives many likes and retweets.

Findings from the study also suggest an intentional attempt by millennials to mask their inadequacies through excessive social media activities aimed at getting noticed. As Rose (2020) notes, the general belief that narcissists have high self-esteem is true. However, Rose also notes that such self-esteem is fragile. It is dependent on external validation and self-

deception. Social media provides a platform for both, thereby fuelling millennials' penchant for narcissistic behaviour.

CHAPTER FIVE: PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND POSSIBLE DIGITAL NARCISSISM DETECTION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on addressing the final research objective of the study, which has been derived from sub-research question 4 (section 1.5.2). It is restated for emphasis.

SRQ4: What framework can be proposed that offers millennials insight into digital narcissism and guiding them on social media usage?

To fulfil this final research objective, and thereby also address SRQ4, a framework was developed by the researcher to contribute towards mitigating the negative effects of an extraordinary amount of time spent and usage of social media platforms by millennials. The framework has been informed by triangulating the literature review with the themes and sub-themes derived during the analysis of the data and the findings of this study.

5.2 Proposed Framework for Millennials and Parents on Social Media Usage and Possible Digital Narcissism Detection

Literature informs us that social media usage is high in society, and that there are both perceived benefits and negative impacts for users of social media. The analysed data of this study correlate with and confirm the literature that were reviewed on social media usage for the millennial generation of KZN. The researcher therefore used these correlations and confirmations to develop and propose a framework that offers insight into digital narcissism and provides guidelines to users, especially millennials and parents of millennials, in social media usage.

Figure 5.1 presents the *Proposed Framework for Millennials and Parents on Social Media Usage and Possible Digital Narcissism Detection*. In essence, the framework incorporates the **positive impacts**, **negative impacts**, and **possible warnings** of social media usage obtained from this research study's findings and themes/sub-themes derived from the data analysis as well as from the findings and outcomes of studies conducted by other researchers as discussed in the literature review. The framework furthermore provides **guidelines** to millennials and parents on social media usage and the detection of possible narcissism.

Figure 5.1: Proposed Framework for Millennials and Parents on Social Media Usage and Possible Digital Narcissism Detection (Source: Researcher)

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The **positive impacts** of social media usage on millennials and parents, as presented in Figure 5.1 and colour coded in green, are summarised as *business connections* (sections 4.4.1.2; 4.6.2; 4.6.3.2), *social connections* (sections 4.4.1.2; 4.6.2; 4.6.3.2; 4.8.1) and *new work opportunities* (sections 4.5.1.2; 4.6.3.2).

Embedded/included in the three **positive impacts** categories as derived from the study's themes and sub-themes are the following advantages: (i) digital technology presents an avenue for business promotion, information searching and sharing of views (sub-theme 1.1, section 4.4.1.2); (ii) digital technology gives a voice to many people, enables families to stay connected via social media, improves both the social and scholastic life of some millennials, and somewhat enhances millennials' verbal communication skills (sub-theme 1.1, section 4.4.1.2; sub-theme 3.3, section 4.6.3.2); (iii) using social media helps with finding a job, connecting to successful individuals in the field of interest, and satisfying the need of belonging and for self-presentation (sub-theme 2.1, section 4.5.1.2); (iv) social media have become relatively inexpensive and widely accessible tools, enabling anyone to access, collaborate, publish, and even build relationships (sub-theme 3.2, section 4.6.2); (v) social media help create jobs for the youth, who are mostly social media influencers (sub-theme 3.3, section 4.6.3.2); (vi) social media help with brand promotion and business marketing (sub-theme 3.3, section 4.6.3.2); Covid-19 created a new form of reliance on virtual contact (sub-theme 5.1, section 4.8.1).

The **negative impacts** of social media usage on millennials and parents, as presented in Figure 5.1 and colour coded in red, are summarised as *personality issues*, *diminished social skills* and *health/well-being* (sections 4.4.1.1; 4.6.2; 4.6.3.1).

Embedded in these three **negative impacts** categories derived from the study's themes and sub-themes are issues found in literature (Chapter Two), which include: (i) a grandiose sense of self-importance (section 2.5.1); (ii) living in a fantasy world that supports delusions of grandeur (section 2.5.2); (iii) the need for constant praise and admiration (section 2.5.3); (iv) exploitation without guilt or shame (section 2.5.4); (v) self-isolation (section 2.6); (vi) self-enhancement and self-promotion (section 2.10). It was furthermore drawn from the narratives (Chapter Four) that while social media have benefits, particularly in bringing pressing issues quickly to the public's attention and generating public reactions, it also comes with a price: (i) verbal communication skills of millennials are negatively affected (sub-theme 1.1, section 4.4.1.1); (ii) digital technology creates a false sense of confidence online (sub-theme 1.1, section 4.4.1.1); (iii) millennials feel more anxious having face-to-face interaction with

people, which may help explain why some of them isolate themselves (sub-theme 1.1, section 4.4.1.1); (iv) foul and vulgar language is used online (sub-theme 1.1, section 4.4.1.1); (v) social media use may be tied to negative mental health outcomes, including suicidality, loneliness, and decreased empathy (sub-theme 3.1, section 4.6.1.1); (vi) digital interaction is a poor substitute for real friends; the consequence may result in depression and poor self-worth (sub-theme 3.3, section 4.6.3.1); (vii) false lifestyles, cyber bulling, and fake friendships (sub-theme 3.3, section 4.6.3.2).

The **warnings** of social media usage on millennials and parents, as presented in Figure 5.1 and colour coded in orange, are divided into *physical* and *mental* warnings. The mental warnings are summarised in sub-theme 3.1 (health and well-being) as, amongst other symptoms, anxiety, suicidality, depression and loneliness due to *self-isolation*, as well as decreased empathy (which may lead to *narcissism*), all under the heading of *mental health* (section 4.6.1.1). The physical warnings are summarised in sub-theme 3.1 (health and well-being) as *eyesight* and *ergonomics* (section 4.6.1.2).

The **guidelines**, colour coded in **blue** and derived from the findings and themes/sub-themes, are summarised as follows:

i) For *Millennials*, the focus is specifically on the amount of time they spend on social media platforms and their frequency of selfie taking. The 'new online self', where a millennial creates and portrays an online persona different to the one perceived in real life, is a clue for attention. Developing this 'new online self' takes effort and time; it therefore requires sensitive attention.

ii) *Parents of millennials* need to: be aware of their millennial child's online duration; sensitively check the nature of their millennial child's posts; and observe personality changes so as to take timeous action to prevent digital narcissism.

5.3   Discussion

The impact of the usage of digital technology on millennials and how it affects their inter-personal skills was first given prominent recognition by Keen (2006) as well as Brown, Halpern and L'Engle (2015), amongst others. Technology enables people to regularly create, nurture and grow an online name, brand, or reputation for themselves. However, this self-same technology regrettably gives millennials the opportunity to repeatedly fall in love with themselves (Keen, 2006; Brown, Halpern and L'Engle, 2015). The latter can be just a "swipe away" given the growth of mobile phones (Kauten and Barry, 2014). Furthermore, social

media is ubiquitous in society and the taking of 'selfies' is a modern phenomenon that is positively, though not exclusively, correlated to digital narcissism. There is even an endearing term, "the selfie generation", to describe this curious activity (Eler, 2017).
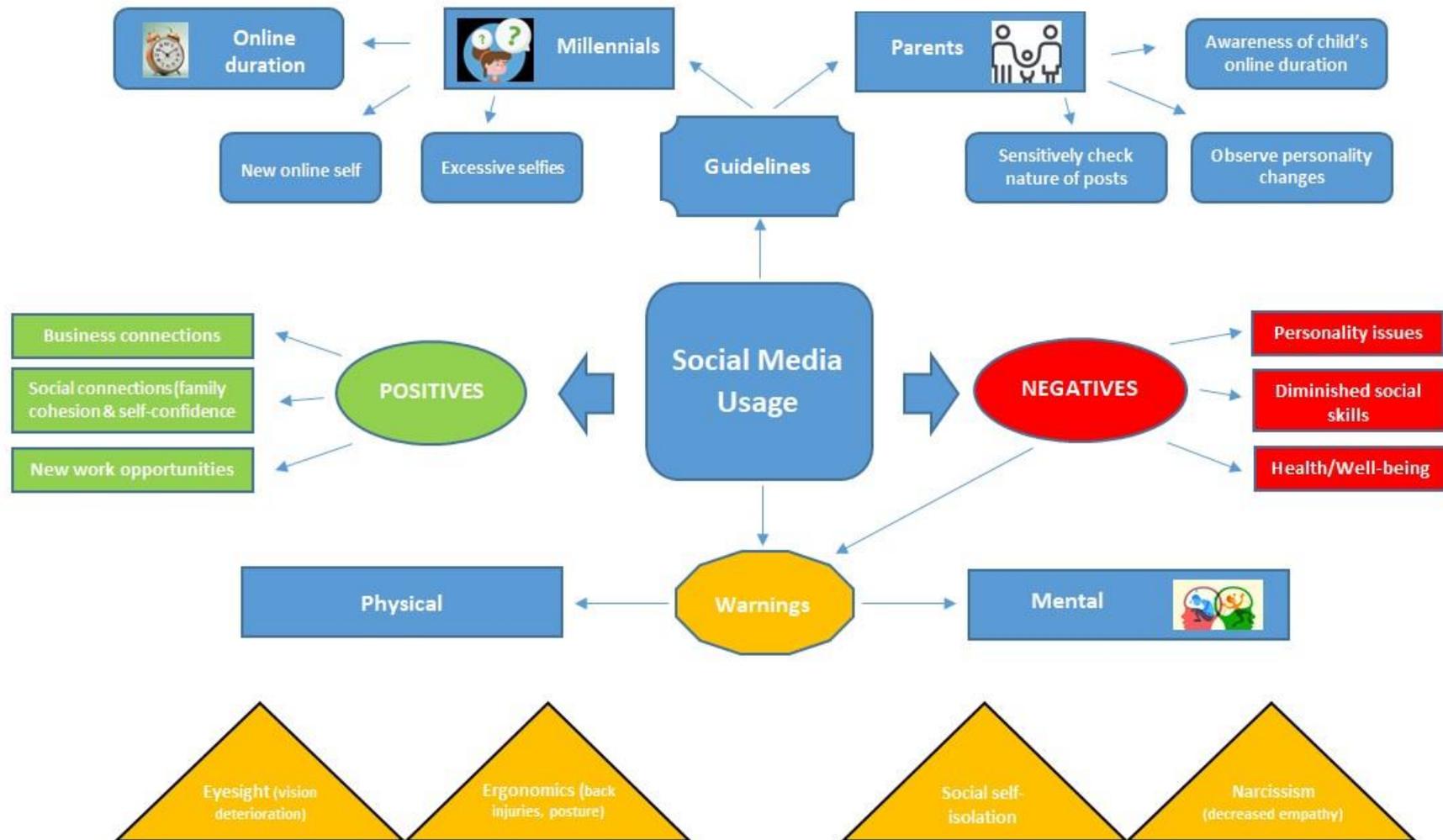
The aim of the *Proposed Framework for Millennials and Parents on Social Media Usage and Possible Digital Narcissism Detection* (Figure 5.1) is therefore to help mitigate the prevalence of digital narcissism amongst the identified target population while simultaneously nurturing sociable beings, especially given the suggestion that social media platforms *Facebook* and *Instagram* can be a narcissist's dream owing to the focus on images and within the concept of users having an online persona that may be different to their offline self (Carpenter, 2012; Van Ouytsel et al., 2015).

In Figure 5.1, the elements colour coded in **red** (i.e., negative impacts) are for a concerned parent/ adult to implement redress actions by making the millennial feel wanted, involved, or important. This is a slow process and involves careful, sensitive engagement that must not appear patronising or condescending. A psychologist may be necessary if required, or if the parent/adult feels overwhelmed.

The warnings, deliberately colour coded in **orange,** is a cautionary signal for both *physical health* and *mental health*. At the *physical health* level, the parent/adult should not only look for narcissistic tendencies but also for good health. The framework warns all social media users to observe family and colleagues for tell-tale signs of health neglect through the way they use handheld devices. Using computer technology with poor or bad light will have a deleterious impact on *eyesight*, which may relate to poor posture and lead for instance to an unhealthy back or neck-related injuries, while the compulsive overuse of technology may result in painful fingers called "smartphone pinkie", which is now a branch of occupational research called *ergonomics* (Thakur, 2018; Solvency, 2012). At a *mental health* level, the parent/adult should be aware that the Internet offers millennials an alternative world to exist in. It affords a user the option of gradually withdrawing from the physical world to only participate in the virtual world. When little (or no) physical activity is witnessed together with continuous online activity, this is a sign that some intervention is needed for the millennial. As this is a medical matter, the researcher advises appropriate professional help.

The **green** colour coding represents *desirable* social media usage conditions. However, even these green conditions require continual observations. It is a quick slide from feeling good to

feeling superior. A good parent may want to praise desirable social media usage behaviour and warn, even inform, the millennial of narcissism.

The overarching recommendation of the researcher to the adult/parent of a millennial is as follows: if in doubt, use the proposed framework (Figure 5.1) to collect thoughts and observations about the millennial of concern. Once the green, red, and orange colour codes have been exhausted, one may carefully ascribe narcissism as the culprit. Consider the option of seeking/deferring to professional advice when feeling overwhelmed and/or uncomfortable.

5.4   Summary

Social media is ubiquitous in society. Through colour coding and key concepts/elements derived from findings in the literature review and from the themes/sub-themes of this study's data analysis, the proposed framework endeavours to provide visual support and enable millennials and parents of millennials to detect a potential social media usage problem and then self-correct. The researcher found that the participants and academics who were exposed to this framework, were moved into intense discussion.

It is important to note that the *Proposed Framework for Millennials and Parents on Social Media Usage and Possible Digital Narcissism Detection* is an initial contribution, and that it is flagged for further transdisciplinary research.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

As demonstrated, several researchers have undertaken extensive research on social media usage, attempting to establish the benefits to users and to society in general. This study contributes to the wide body of international knowledge by exploring the concept of social media narcissism amongst the millennial generation (18–34 years of age) in the KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa, to establish whether the technology is spawning digital narcissism amongst the target group.

The literature reviewed suggests that mobile technology, such as mobile phones, social networks, and mobile software, may be interfering with the natural process in a person's growing up, of learning to evolve beyond adolescent narcissism. Further and perhaps more negatively, it may enable individuals to live in a self-centred social environment devoid of both non-peers and personal criticism. The research subsequently informed a unique case study of the millennials in KZN to determine whether the usage of social media has an impact on identity and image issues and explore the concept of online self-presentation amongst them.

6.2 Answering the research questions

In this section, the author pedantically restates the research questions that guided the literature review and the subsequent data analysis process.

6.2.1 Sub-research question 1

SRQ1: What are the implications of being a millennial in KZN where one grows with immersion in social media?

The findings are like many previous case studies related to the employment of social media worldwide. The study affirmed that there can be alternatively perceived positive and perceived negatives outcomes for DUT millennials. In line with Carpenter (2012) advocating that Facebook is a narcissist's dream, the study found that some millennials appear to spend too much time on social media platforms. For millennials in KZN, the norm is to have a social media presence with many online followers, and to keep posting, tagging, and pouting an all is good in the world for 'me, myself and I'. However, the implications of being a millennial on social media is met with good and bad connotations, since it has become a 'social status' to be seen and to converse online, post about one's daily life, as well as comment and follow celebrities. Also, if one is out there 'virtually', it is deemed as virtuous and noble as one then

becomes noticed and this can be perceived as narcissistic behaviour, which has brought about a huge rise in both individual and group egotism.

According to Kauten and Barry (2014), generally, a narcissist spins self-glorifying fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, attractiveness, and ideal love that make them feel special and in control. Kauten and Barry (2014) further state that these fantasies protect them from feelings of inner emptiness and shame, thus, contradicting facts and opinions are ignored or rationalised away.

It has emerged from the data findings that a concern of digital technology is the emotional detachment it causes to the user. As argued by one of the participants in the psychologist group: "There is less emotion in digital technology as there would be with an eye to contact".

A psychologist participant maintained that digital technology presents a negative impact on the communication skills of the millennia: "Millennials are swayed by social media, blurred boundaries, inaccurate assessments of clients, loss of self-confidence, loss of the essence of physical, social connectivity, and refuting the systems theory and interconnectedness".

6.2.2 Sub-research question 2

SRQ2: Can millennials be classified as a narcissistic generation with traits of growing self-obsession?

The impact of the usage of digital technology on millennials and how it affects their inter-personal skills was first recognised by Keen (2006, cited by Brown, Halpern and L'Engle, 2015). The technology enables people to create and regularly nurture an online name, affording them the chance to fall in love with themselves repeatedly. This is referred to as digital narcissism (Pirelli, Otto and Estoup, 2016). In time, this has changed and as described by Freud's (1914, cited by Kauten and Barry, 2014) Theory of Narcissism, this condition refers to a general personality trait which includes exhibitionism, delusions of grandeur, and fantasies of unlimited power. By choosing a case study of KZN millennials, the researcher sought to identify the essence of human experience about the social media phenomenon, as specified by Creswell (2017). To confirm the above statements from literature, the researcher sought the views of selected participants regarding whether they think millennials can be classified as narcissistic with traits of growing self-absorption (millennials in the study area), and they had this to say:

"Yes, absolutely. I believe that social media has made most millennials, including me, very self-obsessed and narcissistic. The things I now consider my values today were not that important to me in the past. A lot of it has to do with peer-validation that I seem to enjoy from my supposed 'followers', many of whom I do not even know or may never get to meet in real life. So, yes, I believe I have become more narcissistic since I became engrossed in social media."

The above position was re-echoed by another interviewed millennial who remarked:

"You see, in my personal experience, when a person has more than 1000 followers on any social media platform, they suddenly start having feelings of importance and self-obsession. I have friends with 15 000 followers who are quick to respond."

The research strategy involves looking at a small group, project, institution, or company (Creswell, 2012). For this study, the research strategy comprised an intensive investigation of the factors that contributed to the characteristics of the case under investigation. It drew on multiple sources of information in a bid to create a rich, textured description of a social process (Creswell, 2012).

Consistent with outcomes of previous research discussed in the literature review, most participants offered insights into negative and positive influences of digital technology. A particular finding was the affirmation of millennials that extensive social media usage negatively impacted on their verbal communication skills, while it was uncovered from the analysis that digital technology creates a false sense of confidence online. As one participant noted: "I know that at times I tend to isolate myself more when using digital technology, instead of spending time with family and friends. I also feel more confident communicating with new people when I use online communication tools instead of talking to them in person".

Social media sites such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are all a thriving ground for the 'me, me, me' generation who wants the idealisation of a fake reality of life rather than being part of the real world. Everything revolves around millennials and how they are perceived on social media, and the question posed is whether digital technology raises the sadness and anxiety levels, and of course, competition of social media status trends, with the aim of going viral.

This increased usage of the Internet has raised concerns that it could lead to addictions (Pew Research Center, 2016) and social disorders such as narcissism. The psychiatric description of a typical narcissism patient can be traced from the 1970s (Lasch, 1980), where a narcissistic

patient was aptly diagnosed as having depression, feelings of disillusionment, emptiness, and low self-esteem.

Due to the ever-growing presence of social media, particularly in the lives of young people, some commentators are beginning to express concern about the impact of social media's potential adverse effects (Berryman, Ferguson and Negy, 2018). Although social media platforms can contribute to increased enjoyment and convenience, Zheng and Lee (2016) argue that its pervasive nature can also result in excessive use and, consequently, may give rise to several negative outcomes.

Explaining more on the influences of social media, a millennial participant interview revealed the following: "I know of many people who seek approval from others on social media. They get offended if people do not like their pictures or if they do not get a certain number of likes on a picture. They become depressed and let it affect their personal life. They feel they aren't beautiful enough. They also see other girl's pictures and wish they looked like that instead of being happy with the way they are".

Adding to this, one of the millennial parents emphasised that the child suffers from anxiousness due to social media expectation, which consequently led to the child experiencing health issues and depressive mood: "Yes, I have noticed my son is very forgetful, also rather anxious if he does not get messages from his friends, which is of concern. He often gets headaches and appears moody so I sometimes question, are this related to him being so obsessed with his digital gadgets".

6.2.3   Sub-research question 3

SRQ3: What are the risks related to narcissism in digital millennials' sense of self?

Despite the negative concerns about the influence of digital technology shared by all the participants, some acknowledge the profound benefits of the technology.

The seemingly narcissistic practise of taking "selfies" on mobile phones is not a new phenomenon, as the act of distributing "cartes de visite", or pocket-sized photo cards, dates to the 1860s (Day, 2013, cited by Wickel, 2015: 5).

Due to the ever-growing presence of social media, particularly in the lives of young people, some commentators are beginning to express concern about its potential adverse effects (Berryman, Ferguson and Negy, 2018). Although social media platforms can contribute to

increased enjoyment and convenience, Zheng and Lee (2016) argue that their pervasive nature can also result in excessive use and consequently may give rise to several negative outcomes. The above findings echo the sentiment of Zheng and Lee (2016) that devoting much time interacting with technology may cause health problems, such as eyestrain, backaches, carpal tunnel syndrome, and chronic sleep deprivation.

While it is general accepted that social media foster relationships and help bridge the global social divide, it was uncovered that digital interaction is a poor substitute for real friends. It is a concern that millennials cannot be themselves or value what it means to be oneself because digital technology is now an integral part of their lives, keeping them functioning and emotionally charged and driven; so, without a message, video or scrolling through social media platforms, their minds would not cope.

Kircaburun et al. (2018) attribute social media platform usage to be amongst the most popular social behaviours. Given that celebrities strive to remain relevant in the current event of social discourse, it was important to explore their social media posting behaviour.

It was uncovered that on average, a celebrity participant spends two hours minimum online, whilst 16 hours were the most time spent: "About 2–3 hours a day sometimes more depending on whether I am uploading or managing news content".

However, according to the data analysis findings, one of the concerns focused on the impact social media has on mental health; this concern generated mixed findings in the literature. Berryman, Ferguson and Negy (2018) claim that social media use may be tied to negative mental health outcomes, including suicidality, loneliness, and decreased empathy. Consistent with this position, it was uncovered that excessive social media use may lead to mental health challenges.

Predominantly, it was drawn from the data analysed that excessive social media usage results in psychological conditions such as depression and anxiety, especially amongst millennials: "I have experienced the physical impacts of being online for long hours, my eyesight often gets a bit blurry after staring at a screen for long hours, my posture is not aligned, and I don't feel energised"; and celebrity participants: "When I started I couldn't control what to take in and what to leave behind and that triggered my anxiety".

Psychologists Markus and Nurius (1987) maintain that a person has two selves: the "now self" and the "possible self". It is unlikely they anticipated that the Internet would allow a person to approximate their "possible self", or present a version of themselves that is closer to it.

Regarding studies of online narcissism, social media dominates the discussion. Mehdizadeh (2010) distinguishes the possibility of self-suggesting that it "is most pronounced in anonymous online worlds, where accountability is lacking, and the 'true' self can come out of hiding". However, non-anonymous public platforms such as Facebook provide an opportune environment for the expression of this 'hoped-for possible self' (Beck, 2014). Caplan (2003) proffers that problematic use of digital technology is linked more with negative outcomes and poor impulse control rather than with the extreme usage of digital technology.

6.2.4 Sub-research question 4

SRQ4: What framework can be proposed that offers millennials insight into digital narcissism and guiding them on social media usage?

A revealing study by Davenport et al. (2014) found that: (i) narcissistic motives mediate the relationship between narcissism and active social media usage; (ii) tweeting is the preferred method of active college age narcissists; and (iii) there is no relationship between active Facebook usage and narcissism in college sample. This shows that at college level, students who are perceived narcissists do make a choice on the platform. Against this backdrop, parents feel there is still a need to monitor their children's reliance on social media to protect their growth as social beings and the choices they make at college level.

The above statement corroborates with other studies (Plowman, 2015; Dias et al., 2016) that parents play the role of gatekeepers when it comes to facilitating and constraining access and use of digital technologies. This may be associated with the fact that parents seek to balance the education aspirations they have for children and their fears of harmful consequences of excessive usage of digital technologies (Dias et al., 2016). It could also help explain the need to instil moral values in children.

Young (2015) and Kuss and Griffiths (2017) clarify that the main motives for the use of social media include establishing and maintaining online and offline relationships. In agreeing with this, all the participants interviewed disclosed that the purpose of frequenting social media platforms is to connect to friends, family, and acquaintances in their fields.

For the millennials, it was uncovered that the minimum time the participants spent on social media daily was two hours, and 12 hours the maximum. This, negatively, is higher than what O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) typify as the average time spent on social media platforms, namely: high use equates to two (2) hours and low use to 30 minutes. Jelenchick, Eickhoff and Moreno (2013) categorise the average time spent on social media to be between 30 minutes and two (2) hours per day.

Recommendation: This study should be repeated with modern social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok.

The researcher feels obligated to note that although social media is a location for narcissism, online role-playing games such as World of Warcraft show attraction to narcissist as well. A study of 1,471 Korean online gamers revealed narcissists to be more likely addicted to online games than non-narcissists. The concrete goals and rewards the games afford players increased prestige, power, and status (Beck, 2014; Kim et al., 2008).

6.3   Future research

Previous international research has been conducted on the correlation between social media relationships in terms of social anxiety, self-esteem, narcissism, and social networking sites usage, and whether social media reflects or amplifies narcissism (Weiss, 2013). However, no South African research has been undertaken on narcissism and social media use, which is significant as such research may help future researchers understand whether the rapid, widespread adoption of digital technology has limitations, and how best to separate knowledge from controversy.

It is recommended that together with parents, education authorities be advised on the negative influences of social media usage to help educate pupils about the dangers of the phenomenon.

Figure 5.1 needs to be explored through a transdisciplinary lens involving communication media such as journalists, psychologists, and occupational therapists. This thesis represents the first of its kind in KZN to help address a research gap.

The knowledge gap may be closed further with additional research into the phenomenon, and particularly on ways to mitigate the negative impact of the over-extensive use of social media on both teenagers and millennials' mental disposition to create more social beings and a healthier society. The uncovered negative physical influences of high social media

manipulation also appear to be worth further investigation as another opportunity to mitigate human problems and challenges associated with digital technology.

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APPENDIX A: GATEKEEPER CLEARANCE

Directorate for Research and Postgraduate Support
Durban University of Technology
Tromso Annexe, Steve Biko Campus
P.O. Box 1334, Durban 4000
Tel.: 031-3732576/7
Fax: 031-3732946

17th June 2020
Mrs Waheeda Peters
c/o Department of Journalism
Faculty of Arts and Design
Durban University of Technology

Dear Mrs Peters

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE DUT

Your email correspondence in respect of the above refers. I am pleased to inform you that the Institutional Research and Innovation Committee (IRIC) has granted **Full Permission** for you to conduct your research "Is social media spawning digital narcissism? A case study of KwaZulu-Natal digital millennials" at the Durban University of Technology.

The DUT may impose any other condition it deems appropriate in the circumstances having regard to nature and extent of access to and use of information requested.

We would be grateful if a summary of your key research findings can be submitted to the IRIC on completion of your studies.

Kindest regards.
Yours sincerely

_____
DR LINDA ZIKHONA LINGANISO
DIRECTOR: RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT DIRECTORATE

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONS FOR LOCAL CELEBRITIES/ SOCIAL MEDIA EXPERTS

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
INYUVESI YASETHEKWINI YEZOBUCHWEPHESHE

- What have been your most memorable experiences with social media?

- Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role on society? Explain.

- Do you think the usage of social media has a positive or negative impact on your health and well-being? Explain.

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

- Please provide a brief description of your profession and your field of expertise?

- Explain what verbal and non-verbal communication is, and the role of communication in the 21st century. Explain.

- What are the positive and negative impacts of digital technology? Explain.

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONS FOR MILLENNIALS

- What have been your most memorable experiences with social media?

- Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role on society? Explain.

- Do you think that digital technology has played a positive or negative role on your verbal communication skills?

- If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel? Explain.

APPENDIX E: QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS OF MILLENNIALS

- What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal?

- Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role on digital millennials? Explain.

- How do you perceive your role as a parent of a digital millennial? Explain.

APPENDIX F: TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL CELEBRITIES/ SOCIAL MEDIA EXPERTS

<u>**INTERVIEWEE Celeb 1**</u>

Male, leading couturier, constantly posting on social media platforms Facebook and Instagram.

Q1: What have been your most memorable experiences with social media?

For me, as a celebrity, I have so many experiences during my vast 30-year career. My memorable has been the recent dressing of one of the world's most famous humanoids, Sophia at a gala event… The experience of designing for and dressing the robot was exhilarating, and he aims to design more gowns for Sophia as well as look into writing the spec in the aim of teaching other designers how to design for the humanoid. The media coverage was phenomenal and always helps to brand my business, going forward into the fourth industrial revolution. I love the attention I receive, especially the accolades and admiration for my designs which gives me a high.

Q2: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role on society? Explain.

Well, I feel it has a real positive effect as it can really brand someone like me who is in the business of show business.

I have gained more business opportunities purely by posts on Facebook, media coverage and tweeting and re-tweeting by followers and media houses, so I cannot complain but embrace the attention I as a brand can get for my business.

Q3: Do you think the usage of social media has a positive or negative impact on your health and well-being? Explain.

Social media has become an integral part of my business from 12 years ago and it is at times tiring as I am my own brand and I need to be at events constantly around South Africa and the world. Competitiveness in the fashion industry compels me to ensure I remain relevant and evolve which is also a new kind of norm for me. I do look at who likes my posts, any other celebrities as well? I guess I am a bit of a narcissist when it comes to being seen and heard.

With COVID-19 happening this year, I found myself having a break from social media which in a way indirectly gave my health a break as I was experiencing some ill health from last December 2019. So a forced rest has helped me not become anxious about posting on my social media platforms as there was nothing to post professionally.

I realised I do need to switch off from social media for my own sanity and regroup and get back on it as soon as business and mainly travel becomes normalised. I guess it's a good and bad thing to be on. So I am now conscious so I will employ someone soon to post for me without me having to worry who like or dislikes my posts.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Celeb 2

Female, celebrity journalist, social media expert and influencer who has a great passion for media and mass communication.

Q: How often do you post on social media platforms?

When I first started I spammed people but I've gradually slowed down to maybe three times a day.

Q: Has the advancement of social media affected you as a person?

Definitely! Through social media I've become a more confident person through seeing the impact and reception of work I'm doing.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal is the spoken word; non-verbal would be things like body language, facial expressions, enthusiasm to participate in activities or the lack thereof.

Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on your verbal communication skills, your mentality, social environment or scholastic situation?

Definitely because the persona behind the profile is rarely the person themselves, Instagram has always been a lifestyle up. People have just started looking to other lifestyles besides their own.

Q: Do you enjoy posting comments or pictures more? If yes, how often do you do this?

Comments definitely, showing kindness never hurt anyone. Besides people have monetized Instagram posts so those comments count as engagement so I'm not going to mess with nobody back.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you and do you know of anyone who has been affected?

Plenty of influencers have expressed their newly found stutters; others don't even speak on their videos because of the online bullying they were subjected too due to their accents.

Check Sara Langa, Sni Mhlongo and Thabee Happy as South African references – they've publically spoken on these repercussions.

Q: Do you enjoy taking selfies and posting online social media platforms? I definitely do!

Q: There have been reports through the media of selfie deaths, do you think this is a matter of concern or do you agree having the perfect selfie is necessary, no matter the consequences?

No such thing as perfection, how can a perfect selfie exist!

Q: What do you perceive as being the benefits of using social media platforms, especially in your profession?

As a digital marketer social media has been extremely beneficial as I've learnt to use it not to instantly gratify the user but to sell them a product or one they think they do.

Q: Do you know what narcissism means, explain?

The obsession with one self, I have a very baseline understanding of it, but I think it means a very self-absorbed person who gets kinks from well other people showing them excessive and quite frankly unhealthy adoration.

Q: Do you feel influencers have a direct or indirect impact on their followers? How so?

As an influencer myself, yes I do. Because people actually engage with the PROMOTED/ ADVERTISED posts I serve up.

Q: At any point, did you feel the usage of social media had a negative impact on your health and well-being? If so, please elaborate?

Twitter trolls definitely have made me wane off the App; because the keyboard 'warriorism' for me is not it. I am what I consume, unkind content = an unkind Taz.

Q: Is social media a blessing or a curse in terms of being an influencer and being constantly reported on or discussed on social media sites?

Blessing definitely, because the work I do puts bread on the table and plants thoughts in people's minds simultaneously.

Q: If you had the opportunity would you consider having more followers than you already have, or are you satisfied that you have enough followers? Explain?

I'm okay with my community of followers.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role in society? Explain.

It depends how one consumes it, how often they do, who they follow and how far stretched the reality of their lives are from those they follow.

Q: During Covid-19, has your following dwindled or increased? Please elaborate the effects the pandemic has had to date on your usage of social media platforms?

Steady, since everyone has been on their phones. Social media consumes you as much as you allow it too - what works for me is muting Apps and opening messages when I open the app to deter being a slave to the internet. You can't live at the rate of SM - therefore integrate it into your life.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Celeb 3

Female, celebrity Journalist, executive producer and news editor.

Q: As a local celebrity, how often do you post?

Don't really think of myself as a local celebrity. But yes, in order to maintain brand relevance, I post a minimum of once per day, every day.

Q: How many social media platforms are you on, kindly name them?

Only 3 – Facebook, twitter and Instagram. If there's too many management becomes an issue.

Q: On average how many followers do you have on the various social media platforms?

FB about 5000 friends + 3000 followers; Instagram about 2000 followers; Twitter about 6000 followers.

Q: Has the advancement of social media affected you as a person?

Yes. It's given me the ability to source more news stories, engage with my audience more so that I know what they want and how they want it.

Q: How have you responded to the 'pressure' of having to be digital savvy?

In the beginning yes, but now it's part of my job as an editor and journalist.

Q: How many hours do you spend in a day on online social media platforms?

About 2-3 hours a day sometimes more depending on whether I am uploading or managing news content.

Q: Which are the online social media platforms you frequent and explain why?

Twitter for breaking news since the trend is that it has become a trusted resource for journalists. Facebook – because practically ALL my audience are there. They love engaging and enjoying the good/humorous side of me and the news stories I post. Instagram mostly for the scenic picture stories I love to tell.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal communication is actually what I say – nonverbal could be what's depicted in the photos on posts – reading between the lines and finding and publishing the humour that people are drawn to.

Q: Do you enjoy chatting online rather than having verbal communication with family and friends at times?

Yes. I enjoy online chats with people I don't know. But with family it is always better face-to-face.

Q: Do you feel any negative thoughts when you do not get a 'like' on social media after posting something online?

No. I think I have outgrown that initial trepidation. With me it's not about the likes – it's about how far I can extend the Newsbreak Lotus FM Brand and draw ears to the radio platform.

Q: How do you react to trolls online (if any)?

Click, block delete. No, sometimes I do engage them to find out what they have in mind. I'm a people person. So I want to know what goes on in people's heads. But if they are just being facetious I don't engage with them.

Q: How do you balance your time on social media platforms with your personal and professional life?

I am on leave or off, I give social media a rest. When I am at work, it is part of my job.

Q: How do you see your future in the digital age as an artist in South Africa? Artist?

I think it will be beneficial to many journalists. There will be a lot more opportunities created.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on your verbal communication skills, your mentality, social environment or scholastic situation?

With school, yes – I can actually see the difference n verbal communication with children I meet. I work a lot with children doing presentation, public speaking etc. so social media has negatively affected their ability to speak, spell and even talk or complete simple tasks unless they "live" in their virtual world.

Q: Do you enjoy posting comments or pictures more? If yes, how often do you do this?

Less is more in the radio industry. Same goes with social media. Nobody wants to read a thesis. So, a good picture with a catchy hashtag and post works best.

Q: Would you say you have more friends or fans online? Fans.

Q: How important is it to have followers online?

So that your content gets spread far and wide.

Q: Is there a selection criterion you follow before choosing a follower online?

Yes. They must not be women-hungry men; from India.

Q: Do you prefer having more local or international fans and why?

Local fans are the best because this is my audience.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you and do you know of anyone who has been affected?

Yes. Trolls can badly affect your online profile but they don't exist in the real world so they don't make a difference to my mental health.

Q: Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert, and why?

Introvert. I love being by myself but I also enjoy hearing and reading good news and stories about other people. I regard people as my family and believe in the Sanskrit saying Vasudaiva Kuttumbakkam – the whole world is my family. At work I call all my fans and audience members my Family.

Q: Do you enjoy taking selfies and posting online social media platforms? Sometimes yes.

Q: If yes, how often do you do this?

Maybe once or twice a week.

Q: There have been reports through the media of selfie deaths, do you think this is a matter of concern or do you agree having the perfect selfie is necessary, no matter the consequences?

Ha-ha. No. I think I know where to draw the limit.

Q: If you did not have access to digital technology, what would you do with your time?

Read a lot more newspapers, magazines etc. to source good hard-hitting news stories. Keep up to date with news trends. Listen to the radio more and watch TV more.

Q: What do you perceive as being the benefits of using social media platforms, especially in your profession?

Our content and news has a longer lifespan online. It helps build our news brand and places Newsbreak on par with other newsrooms.

Q: Do you know what narcissism means?

Yes.

Q: Do you feel local celebrities have a direct or indirect impact on their followers? How so?

Indirect – What they say and what they do is often mimicked by people but also encourages people to speak out on certain issues they would normally not pay attention to like the GBV trends now.

Q: If social media did not exist, would you be able to survive as an artist?

Yes. Artists always find a way to build an identity and rise from the chaos of the world around them. That's what good marketing and public relations do.

Q: At any point, did you feel the usage of social media had a negative impact on your health and well-being? If so, please elaborate?

Yes. I was being trolled by a few colleagues at work. They would take screen grabs of my posts and conversations and send it to my managers with their interpretations, trying to get me into trouble. I had a lot of explaining to do and wasted a lot of time trying to defend myself. Eventually, I ended up on the committee that helped develop a social media policy for the corporation so I managed to turn a challenge into a win-win situation. Those colleagues I have blocked but they still "monitor" me and send screen grabs everywhere. They still have negative opinions about me, but what I don't know does not affect me. When a person meets me or gets to know me then they realise that these colleagues are just jealous or really immature. Best advice I give these people is to LEARN from me. One day I'll be last year's fruitcake – there will be a space for a new celeb. Train to be that celeb now. Create your own brand and relevance. That's how I encourage the youngsters in my team.

Q: Is social media a blessing or a curse in terms of being an influencer and being constantly reported on or discussed on social media sites?

Blessing – It's building and extending my programme's radio brand.

Q: If you had the opportunity would you consider having more followers than you already have, or are you satisfied that you have enough followers? Explain?

Satisfied – Too much become difficult to handle.

Q: What have been your most memorable experiences with social media?

My trip to Mauritius for Maha Shivratree – I had the most fun and the most engagement with my reporting and videos. The pictures were amazing and many people said they actually felt like I was taking them to Mauritius for this story. They felt like they were there with me. More so, Mauritius has always been touted as a holiday destination. Now, more people want to visit for the spiritual experience that I enjoyed – I am a Muslim but visited special temples in Mauritius. The engagement from social media helped me to respect my audience better and develop new relationships with people who love Lotus FM. It was such a great experience with social media and people. Yes, I would do it all again.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role in society? Explain.

Positive – everyone now has a soap box to say what they like but thanks to our reporting people now know their limits or have an idea of their limits.

Q: Do you think the usage of social media has a positive or negative impact on your health and well-being?

Explain Positive. I still don't believe everything I read online. But I still love the little titbits of information that help me pass my time, maybe inspire me to do some research and digging and find a nice news angle to cover on the radio current affairs programme.

Q: During Covid-19, has social media following dwindled or increased, please elaborate the impact it has had on you?

Wow. It has actually boomed. So much so that the programme has become the most downloaded content within the SABC fold again. We earned this accolade in 2017. People want to engage more and rely on social media more during lockdown. Even TV viewership has increased. But TV's are now becoming obsolete because everything is on your phone or smart device. The lockdown for Covid-19 has proved that there are HUGE social media audiences that we as multi-platform broadcast corporations and newsrooms HAVE to tap into. There's money to be made there.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Celeb 4

Male, social entrepreneur and public speaker, and CEO.

Q: What have been your most memorable experiences with social media?

Build relationship to work with Google on LinkedIn.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role on society? Explain.

Positive role – Normal citizens now hold entities like government and businesses accountable. E.g. Hashtag like #ClicksMustFall #VotsekANC (Lead President to read one letter). These entities previously used to have power to control message on media. Also Social Media has created more jobs for youth. According to Business Insider businesses will be spent $ 15 billion in 2022 in social media influencers (https://www.businessinsider.com/influencer-marketing-report?IR=T)

Q: Do you think the usage of social media has a positive or negative impact on your health and well-being? Explain.

Negative, Social Media companies make more money from keep users glued on their platform. The more time the user spent on the platform the more ads are sold. They hire psychologists and neurologists to develop addictive techniques that turn into algorithm to glue me on their Platform.

Q: As a social influencer how often do you post? Once a day.

Q: How many social media platforms are you on, kindly name them?

Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, WhatsApp.

Q: On average how many followers do you have on the various social media platforms?

Facebook – 2000; Instagram – 400; LinkedIn – 2000

Q: Has the advancement of social media affected you as a person?

Yes, positive, especially for my business. They designed.

Q: How have you responded to the 'pressure' of having to be digitally savvy?

I have joined Microsoft and Google exclusive programs. I get benefits to be trained and expensive certificate for free paid by those companies. This put me 5 years ahead of most of the people.

Q: How many hours do you spend in a day on online social media platforms? 5 hours

Q: Which are the online social media platforms you frequent and explain why?

Facebook and LinkedIn is to build business partnership for my business projects and to get people to participate on my projects.

Q: How many followers? Facebook – 2000; Instagram – 400; LinkedIn – 2000

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal communication – send a meaningful message by speaking with someone in words that he or she can hear.

Non-verbal communication sends a meaningful message using symbols or movement without sound.

Q: Do you enjoy chatting online rather than having verbal communication with family and friends at times?

I prefer verbal communication.

Q: How does it make you feel when you are online?

Good as most of the time I learn something. I have customised my online platforms to give usually information.

Q: When you offline?

Good. When I am offline I am reading books or listening to educational materials.

Q: If you had no social media for a day, how will it make you feel? Good.

Q: Do you feel any negative thoughts when you do not get a 'like' on social media after posting something online? No.

Q: How do you react to trolls online (if any)? I block.

Q: How do you balance your time on social media platforms with your personal and professional life?

I spent 5 hours on social media and online, 12 hours working.

Q: How do you see your future in the digital age as an artist in South Africa?

More opportunities Facebook working on introducing features that will allow artists to charge fee for online live streaming. Social Media open global doors easily, e.g. Master KG with Jerusalema, Sho Majozi with John Cena song.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on your verbal communication skills, your mentality, social environment or scholastic situation?

Positively

Q: Do you enjoy posting comments or pictures more? If yes, how often do you do this?

Pictures, to share my projects progress three times a week.

Q: Would you say you have more friends or fans online? Friends

Q: How important is it to have followers online?

Very important, it boosts your brand. When people look at number of followers they trust your brand.

Q: Is there a selection criterion you follow before choosing a follower online?

Q: Do you prefer having more local or international fans and why?

Local - my business is focused on addressing local problems.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you and do you know of anyone who has been affected?

Yes, to show the seriousness of this Google has even design an application to address the health issue. The application is called Digital Well-being. It helps people to block the use of application at certain time.

Q: Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert, and why?

Extrovert, I like to entertain people when we are in a group.

Q: Do you enjoy taking selfies and posting online social media platforms? If yes, how often do you do this?
No

Q: There have been reports through the media of selfie deaths, do you think this is a matter of concern or do you agree having the perfect selfie is necessary, no matter the consequences?

No it is no necessary. It is just a picture.

Q: If you did not have access to digital technology, what would you do with your time?

Reading books.

Q: What do you perceive as being the benefits of using social media platforms, especially in your profession?

Building business partnership – I have raised hundreds of thousands through network I have built on LinkedIn. I had opportunities to travel the world because of the network have built on LinkedIn.

Q: Do you know what narcissism means? No

Q: Do you feel local celebrities have a direct or indirect impact on their followers? How so?

Yes, through their different arts (e.g. music message).

Q: If social media did not exist, would you be able to survive as an artist? -

Q: At any point, did you feel the usage of social media had a negative impact on your health and well-being? If so, please elaborate?

I once used it for 10 hours. I felt depressed.

Q: Is social media a blessing or a curse in terms of being an influencer and being constantly reported on or discussed on social media sites?

Is a blessing, when I do project, I am easily getting support.

Q: If you had the opportunity would you consider having more followers than you already have, or are you satisfied that you have enough followers? Explain?

More followers – More followers mean more support and strengthening my brand and making it more investable.

Q: What have been your most memorable experiences with social media? -

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role in society? Explain. -

Q: During Covid-19, has social media following dwindled or increased, please elaborate the impact it has had on you?

Increased – I was forced to do virtual events so it leads to doing engaged content.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Celeb 5

Female, blogger, author and managing editor.

Q: As a social influencer how often do you post?

Not very often personally, but professionally, I post every day.

Q: How many social media platforms are you on, kindly name them?

Facebook and LinkedIn – I have dabbled in Pinterest for work, but not so much. I don't visit Twitter anymore. Instagram was too much like FB, so I dropped it personally.

Q: On3r4 average how many followers do you have on the various social media platforms?

Just under 700 on LinkedIn.

Q: Has the advancement of social media affected you as a person?

I'd like to say no, but I think it has. When I post an achievement, I catch myself checking all through the day to see who responded and what they've said.

Q: How have you responded to the 'pressure' of having to be digitally savvy?

I feel pressured to post every day for my company and to keep up-to-date with everything going on around me, as knowledge is power these days. As a writer, I find myself in a quandary every time I write a blog. I need to up my following to build a base for future advertising/sponsorship. However, what I write is not always popular. It may not be politically correct or it might seem to be a little bit too dogmatic for some readers' tastes.

However, I believe that writers, in order to truly be successful, have to write from deep within, to hold a mirror to their inner souls and bare it to their audience in order for their writing to be authentic.

Q: How many hours do you spend in a day on online social media platforms?

Probably an hour or two at the most; I have a FB fast every weekend to disconnect.

Q: Which are the online social media platforms you frequent and explain why?

Facebook and LinkedIn.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal is using words or speech and non-verbal isn't.

Q: Do you enjoy chatting online rather than having verbal communication with family and friends at times?

Yes, probably because I'm a better writer than talker. I don't even like talking on the phone.

Q: How does it make you feel when you are online?

It makes me feel like I have a voice to more people than I would normally come into contact with.

Q: When you offline?

I feel fine. I don't get obsessive about it.

Q: If you had no social media for a day, how will it make you feel?

Quite OK – I had no social media today and it was a public holiday.

Q: Do you feel any negative thoughts when you do not get a 'like' on social media after posting something online?

Yes, but only if it's my close family members.

Q: How do you react to trolls online (if any)?

Luckily, I have never had to deal with one! But I don't post controversial stuff.

Q: How do you balance your time on social media platforms with your personal and professional life?

I have it firmly under control. I don't let social media overwhelm my social life.

Q: How do you see your future in the digital age as an artist in South Africa?

With coronavirus and 4IR, many more people are going digital, and so I think I will be relying more on social media to promote my own projects in future.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on your verbal communication skills, your mentality, social environment or scholastic situation?

It has been positive in that me, a normal person, now has a voice and a reach into society that is unprecedented, but it has impacted negatively in terms of all family members allocating time to SM. I would rather post one message for all family and friends to see than contact them individually, and scholastically, bullying has become an issue as people are far braver to say things behind a screen than to your face. My son has already experienced this with his school buddies.

Q: Do you enjoy posting comments or pictures more? If yes, how often do you do this?

I like to post with a photo, as it is seen engaged with by more readers. Pictures rather than comments – for work, I try to do it every day on FB.

Q: Would you say you have more friends or fans online?

More friends, but that may change in the future.

Q: How important is it to have followers online?

It's extremely important if you have a business. It's the modern-day advertising.

Q: Is there a selection criterion you follow before choosing a follower online?

Personally, it must be someone I know. Professionally, it is anybody who is interested in the business.

Q: Do you prefer having more local or international fans and why?

For my company, local is better, as it is easier to control the relationship, but for authors, it is better to have both, as you will then sell more books.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you and do you know of anyone who has been affected?

My son began subscribing to TikTok and it really affected his focus, attitude and moods. We have now restricted him to only a few hours one day a week.

It seems to me that it is breeding a culture of superficial relationships and elevating the trendy, hip and connected into a social hierarchy to rival the jock and nerd war of the 80s.

Maybe we've always been this way – it has only now had a spotlight shone on it. We want to be loved, we want to be liked. In my most cynical moments, I see it as window dressing for our souls so that everyone we know will think we are OK on the outside. It is similar to a snapshot taken of us smiling in a candid moment, only to replace our frowns and proffer the cold shoulder when the shutter closes.

Q: Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert, and why?

I am a bit of both. I write better than I speak, but I have been forced to come out of my shell in my work position. I can be quiet most of the time, but vivacious at functions/events.

Q: Do you enjoy taking selfies and posting online social media platforms? -

Q: If yes, how often do you do this?

No, I'm not really a selfie person, unless it is with others. I don't do it often, though.

Q: There have been reports through the media of selfie deaths, do you think this is a matter of concern or do you agree having the perfect selfie is necessary, no matter the consequences?

It is very concerning, as it shows the rise of narcissism and the need to have a perfect image all the time, which is exhausting.

Q: If you did not have access to digital technology, what would you do with your time?

I would read, write and be outside more.

Q: What do you perceive as being the benefits of using social media platforms, especially in your profession?

I reach people who wouldn't necessary find the company otherwise. I get to blog and show that we know the business well – have expert knowledge and are trustworthy (not flighty or a start-up).

Q: Do you know what narcissism means? Yes.

Q: Do you feel local celebrities have a direct or indirect impact on their followers? How so?

They are not called influencers for nothing, and businesses don't pay them to be influencers for nothing either. They tend to the 'word of mouth' in a digital age that people tend to trust over overt advertising.

Q: If social media did not exist, would you be able to survive as an artist?

As a business, yes, but on a smaller scale, no. Personally, I think a small business needs to use SM as a platform to advertise their skills, expertise and services, and show a 'human side' to their business.

Q: At any point, did you feel the usage of social media had a negative impact on your health and well-being? If so, please elaborate?

This need for approval is particularly disturbing for a Christian writer, as Jesus set Himself up as the 'rock of offense', one who was so counter-culture, that if alive today, most of his followers would have deleted Him off their Facebook and Twitter lists with no hesitation.

We as Christian writers have to be so careful that in being culture- conscious to win the world we don't instead succumb to the desire to win people over to ourselves. If anyone follows me, let him follow me in order to follow Christ.

And let me write for an Audience of One's approval alone.

Q: Is social media a blessing or a curse in terms of being an influencer and being constantly reported on or discussed on social media sites?

It can be both, depending if it is negative or positive.

Q: If you had the opportunity would you consider having more followers than you already have, or are you satisfied that you have enough followers? Explain?

When I self-publish, I am going to need to build a following on my blog to draw people to buy my books.

Q: What have been your most memorable experiences with social media?

The encouragement I've received from friends and family on my achievements. During lockdown, I asked friends and family to send photos of themselves holding a birthday greeting for my son, who turned 12, as he couldn't have a party or see friends. I made it into a video in lieu of a present, and he absolutely loved it, and so did my connections on FB.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role in society? Explain.

Positive, in that it connects you with friends and family no matter where they are. It is also a great platform to promote your business or find interests or input/feedback on your work. It is also great to see the 'mood on the ground' on certain issues in society. It is also an outlet to vent your frustrations, or share your views and connect with your 'tribe'. Negative, in that it isolates you while deceiving you into thinking that you are really connecting. It is a poor substitute for real friends and is also deceptive in that it shows the highlight reel of your life, instead of all the ups and downs. It can make you depressed when you see all the holidays, achievements and successes of other people on a daily basis, or when you get sucked into fake news, or when you are trolled. It can become an obsession with getting people you don't even know to like you and your views. It can affect your self-worth, in that you are affected if people don't respond positively to what you have posted. It can lead to bullying or abuse/stalking. My sister was stalked by a guy she knew until she had to go off SM totally for six months and come back on under a different name.

Q: During Covid-19, has social media following dwindled or increased, please elaborate the impact it has had on you?

It has done both. People have vented and been desperate for info, and have also retreated into their shells, depending on how they have dealt with the lockdown. Sometimes the sheer dearth of information has been overwhelming that I've felt like retreating and having a break.

(Some comments taken from her article called **The social media monster,** Posted: September 17, 2013 in The writing journey)

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Celeb 6

Female, celebrity model, social media influencer, brand ambassador.

Q: What have been your most memorable experiences with social media?

It has to be seeing myself grown from just being an ordinary person to being one of the known social media influencers, especially winning the recent face for Oxy South Africa.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role on society? Explain.

A bit of both, it all depends on which perspective you look at it from. But in all honesty it has done much more good than bad to people.

Q: Do you think the usage of social media has a positive or negative impact on your health and well-being? Explain.

At the moment yes, I am someone who is able to filter what to take in and what to leave out. That has helped me easily surf the online world wave.

Q: As a social influencer how often do you post?

It depends if I have any campaign running but on normal days, at least twice a week.

Q: How many social media platforms are you on, kindly name them?

I am on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Q: On average how many followers do you have on the various social media platforms?

In total, close to 15 000.

Q: Has the advancement of social media affected you as a person?

Positively yes, the changes are always social media user friendly and every time they are advanced, it's for the sake of improving lives of the frequent users.

Q: How have you responded to the 'pressure' of having to be digitally savvy?

I am one consistent person who truly understands himself. I never feel pressured because I am not even that much consumed by the digital world.

Q: How many hours do you spend in a day on online social media platforms?

HAHAHA, almost 16 hours.

Q: Which are the online social media platforms you frequent and explain why?

Instagram, I love photographs and beautiful aesthetics.

Q: How many followers? I have 7899 followers on Instagram.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal communication is having those heating conversations through verbal platforms and non-verbal can be communicating though nonverbal platforms such as body language and gestures.

Q: Do you enjoy chatting online rather than having verbal communication with family and friends at times?

Chatting is much more convenient because you get to attend to almost everyone at the same time.

Q: How does it make you feel when you are online?

It feels like I have so much power in my hands – the power of reaching out to people who are not even around.

Q: When you offline?

Relaxing and worth it. At some point you do need some time out.

Q: If you had no social media for a day, how will it make you feel?

I would be bored for maybe a few hours till I get the hang of what to do in the meantime.

Q: Do you feel any negative thoughts when you do not get a 'like' on social media after posting something online?

Not really, people have a choice on what to react to online and how to react to it. I always tell myself that.

Q: How do you react to trolls online (if any)?

I pay less attention to those. I avoid negative energy.

Q: How do you balance your time on social media platforms with your personal and professional life?

I know there's time for almost everything in one's day. That is how I work everything out.

Q: How do you see your future in the digital age as an artist in South Africa?

Definitely not one of the things I have thought of but SA is a developing country so the advancement of technology in the country might turn out just good and work out in favour for artist or 'creatives'.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on your verbal communication skills, your mentality, social environment or scholastic situation?

A bit of both but mostly negative, people choose to interact online now which has someone killed the culture of meeting up to catch up amongst people.

Q: Do you enjoy posting comments or pictures more? If yes, how often do you do this?

Posting pictures is much more fun, I post and share almost every 2 days.

Q: Would you say you have more friends or fans online?

I have more friends online, supporters to be precise.

Q: How important is it to have followers online?

It depends on the niche you want to take on. Sometimes having many followers is a disadvantage to privacy.

Q: Is there a selection criterion you follow before choosing a follower online?

Yes, we must at least relate on some things.

Q: Do you prefer having more local or international fans and why?

I would like to interact with anyone from anywhere; it would be more meaningful that way.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you and do you know of anyone who has been affected?

Not at the moment and I haven't heard anyone complain about that.

Q: Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert, and why?

I cannot identify with any of the 2 because of my personality and mood swings. How I feel for that day determines the person I will be that day.

Q: Do you enjoy taking selfies and posting online social media platforms? If yes, how often do you do this?

I prefer professionally taken photographs for posting online.

Q: There have been reports through the media of selfie deaths, do you think this is a matter of concern or do you agree having the perfect selfie is necessary, no matter the consequences?

It is absurd. You cannot be worrying about a perfect picture while facing death. A normal person would even forget they have a phone.

Q: If you did not have access to digital technology, what would you do with your time?

Spend most of it with everyone who cares about me and read a lot.

Q: What do you perceive as being the benefits of using social media platforms, especially in your profession?

Making money while you sleeping has to be the biggest benefit.

Q: Do you know what narcissism means?

It's a broad word and it depends on which context you are using it on.

Q: Do you feel local celebrities have a direct or indirect impact on their followers? How so?

Mostly indirect – People tend to get inspired by people they admire the most and they end up doing just like them.

Q: If social media did not exist, would you be able to survive as an artist?

I doubt I would have been one because social media was my breakthrough.

Q: At any point, did you feel the usage of social media had a negative impact on your health and well-being? If so, please elaborate?

When I started I couldn't control what to take in and what to leave behind and that triggered my anxiety.

Q: Is social media a blessing or a curse in terms of being an influencer and being constantly reported on or discussed on social media sites?

It all depends on what you are working with; it is a blessing because you get more famous quickly.

Q: If you had the opportunity would you consider having more followers than you already have, or are you satisfied that you have enough followers? Explain?

I would choose to have; I want to reach out to more people.

Q: During Covid-19, has social media following dwindled or increased, please elaborate the impact it has had on you?

It has been declining. Creating content has become a mission and with that being said people aren't feeding on any content.

Q: Also, just add whatever other thoughts you have on the matter, pretty please....

Social media can make you or break you. When using it you must be extra careful from whom you mention and interact with to what you put out there. Protecting your peace is also very important because being exposed to many things or topics might trigger a lot within you.

ENDS

APPENDIX G: TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH EDUCATIONAL AND CLINICAL PYSCHOLOGISTS

<u>**INTERVIEWEE Psychologist 1**</u>

Counselling psychologist in Durban; the interview was conducted telephonically in October 2020

Q: Do social media affect millennials?

This is kind of broad. Social media does affect millennials in various areas, for example their social lives – in terms of identifying with certain people, in terms of their social status, wanting to belong to a certain economic status. It affects them financially, because they want these sudden, instant riches that they see others having on social media, some who happen to be role models for them. So they see them with big houses and flashy cars and go into certain behaviours like gambling to try to get money as fast as they can, because there is nothing that shows them how people got there. So they try by all means to reach that balloon type of thing. And also, it affects them in terms of who they are – their identity – and where they stand, because if they can't do that, then they are defeated and they feel they are not able to sustain themselves and then they go to into depression and anxiety, thinking they don't belong.

Q: The Effect of Covid-19?

Covid-19 has affected millennials in terms of not being around familiar people and generally being aware from people. Coming home, yes they are family, but finally they realise they don't know each other. And there has been a lot of conflict. Besides that, they are in a space where they can't reach out to familiar people, people who are their friends and this makes them even more depressed. Besides that, further there has been a lot of pressure to perform from school, with so much to do. Those who are unemployed feel worthless. They feel they have not achieved anything. The lockdown has already brought out a lot of insecurities, uncertainties and hopelessness in not knowing what the future holds for them. Covid-19 has really affected a lot of people, not only millennials.

Q: People who already have mental problems using social media?

It is dangerous? Well, social media is wide, with a lot of variety. What we are looking at is the choices people make, what it is that they actually choose and look at on social media. I would say that some people do make dangerous choices. So if somebody already has deep-seated issues of mental illness, they may gravitate towards something that may feed what they have and they will use that to be positive and step out of what they have. It depends on where a person is at. It is actually about the choices that people make; what they choose to do on social media. So if you are not good at making the right decisions, you won't be able to whether something on social media is good or bad for them and it can exacerbate their problem. If a person is resilient enough and has learnt some things from therapy, then social media won't hurt them much.

Q: Social media detoxing opportunities?

Now with Covid-19, we have had a lot of social media binging, where people sit and use social media. It has created addictive behaviour in some people. During Covid-19, people have used social media to stay in contact with others. So we do not know how far people have gone in that respect and it may come to a time when it is more toxic, with people using it just to feed from it, just to be stable. Right now, nobody knows who is doing what, but we will see how people adjust to the normal world without social media; what they are going to do. Are they going to be able to focus without it? Will they find it hard to listen to their teacher without using their phones and getting into certain websites? It is something that is going to happen. Right now, the situation is condoning that because people are feeding from that, but when we go back into normality, people have to be weaned off behaviours like those.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Psychologist 2

Qualified Psychologist, employed at a University of Technology; email interview.

Q: Please provide a brief description of your profession and your field of expertise?

I am an Employee Wellness Manager qualified with a Master's in Employee Assistance Programme. I am registered with the SACSSP. I currently offer assistance support and counselling to employees of the University to address personal and professional issues. My expertise includes offering a holistic integrated curative wellness services to the university in keeping with their strategic objectives.

Q: Explain what verbal and non-verbal communication is, and the role of communication in the 21st century? Explain

Verbal: Oral face-to-face or telephonic communication. Non-verbal: Use of body language and gestures.

The combination of verbal and non-verbal communication, especially in the field of counselling and when dealing with people, is very essential in the 21st century. However, the introduction of the 4IR, and digital technology amongst the millennials, this renders this type of communication traditional. The Virtual world will definitely influence these two types of communication.

Q: In your opinion, is there real cause for concern with regards to verbal and non-verbal communication amongst digital millennials in KZN?

Definitely – Millennials are most comfortable and savvy online rather than using the traditional modes of communicating. In influences emotions and mental connectivity

Q: What are the positive and negative impacts of digital technology? Explain.

Positive: Makes it easier to keep in touch with clients, easier, quicker, no commuting time. Adds to knowledge base.

Negative: Millennials are swayed by social media, blurred boundaries, inaccurate assessments of clients, loss of self-confidence, loss of the essence of physical, social connectivity, and refuting the systems theory and interconnectedness and interconnectedness. Change in communication patterns.

Q: Do you feel the advancement and usage of online social media platforms has affected the digital millennials?

Yes, and No. It takes them away from the reality. Too much time is spent on smartphones. Impact on lifestyle, exercise, communication with baby boomer and parents, sedentary lifestyles, cyber bullying, criminal activity. Limited accountability to parents and employers, Social isolation, mental health problems, poor social etiquette and skills.

Yes, positively – marriage partners, timeous, helps millennials to look at things through different lenses. Easy access to material, Build relationships and they also become more brand aware and keep up to date with benchmarks and trends.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions to the 18 to 25 generation in South Africa? If yes, how and why?

Social: Information overload, propaganda, indoctrination. Medical: Ergonomics, sedentary life style, eye care, poor lifestyle, stress.

Q: Are you aware of any social or medical implications of over-usage of online social media platforms that are being investigated? No

Q: Has your work situation changed because of the rise of digital media? Yes

Q: Do you think medical professionals like yourself are seeing more cases of social breakdowns in families due to an indirect or director impact of social media usage on the younger generation?

Yes. Exposure to negative information; poor interpersonal relationships/interconnectedness; lack of boundaries/ privacy issues.

Q: Do you believe there are advantages to digital millennials using online social media platforms?

Yes.

Q: How do you see the future of communication through online social media platforms in the digital age? -

Q: Do you use social media for your profession? If so, how often?

Yes, all the time.

Q: Do you think parents understand the impact digital technology has on the younger generation?

The educated and professionals do.

Q: Should there be boundaries and monitoring of the usage of social media by parents? If so, how often and from what age?

Yes – Different degrees of monitoring for different ages. It is the digital world so keeping kids away from technology and social media is a disservice to them. Supervised monitored guidance in keeping with best practice is necessary

Q: In your opinion, do millennials possess any traits of narcissistic personalities because of social media usage? If so, elaborate?

Yes – They develop a false sense of importance and arrogance leading them not to be empathetic towards their siblings, peers and parents. Look matters today so this influences social relationship. Leads to bullying, austercism.

ENDS

<u>**INTERVIEWEE Psychologist 3**</u>

Clinical psychologist, Durban; email Interview.

Q: Please provide a brief description of your profession and your field of expertise?

I am a clinical psychologist practising since 2009. To become a clinical psychologist in South Africa a Master's in Science (psychology) has to be completed, of course with the undergraduate degree and an honours degree with psychology as a major subject. A screening process has to be completed to be selected into the master's programme at any of the tertiary institutes. There is a year of academic studies. To continue to practice in South Africa a further requirement is to complete a year each for an internship and community service programme. These services can be completed at any of the approved government facilities which can include hospitals, army, prisons etc. A mini thesis needs to be completed prior to graduating. You have to be registered with the Health Profession Council of South Africa (HPCSA). To practice as a private practitioner, you have to register with the BHF and obtain a private practice number.

In South Africa we have categories of psychologist with clinical psychologist diagnosing and treating psychiatric/ mental disorders. The other two are educational psychologist and industrial psychologist. There is a move towards including further specialisations like forensic and neuropsychology. The HPCSA provides the guidelines for providing our services, and dictates our scope of practice, ethics, code of conduct etc. A board exam with obtaining 90 % was needed in order to pass and continue to practice. It is also required that we continue with education and keeping up to date with the changing findings in our field. Over a period of two years' clinical psychologist are required to obtain 26 points for continued educational development and four ethics points. We are audited for this from time to time.

At a clinical psychologist's practice, the patients present with a range of disorders from chronic to acute. Disorders commonly diagnosed are anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, acute stress disorder, phobias, gender dysphoria. The age range for the patients is from 4 years to as old as needed. When working with children it is important to keep in mind the Children's Act, the rights of parents, confidentiality etc. I have worked with a 90-year-old patient as well. The assessment usually includes an intake to ascertain the patient's diagnosis. This can include a neuropsychological assessment for functional assessment especially for any insults to the brain which can include dementia and injuries due to insults to the brain through either strokes or injuries. It can be a screening or assessment for intellectual challenges and for placement into special schools etc. Teamwork with social workers, occupational therapists, speech therapists enhances therapy. Psychological assessment for medical patients can be provided as well. I provide psychological assessment for medical conditions such as recommendations for the renal programme and renal transplants, amputations, cancer which includes palliative care. Reports are provided to the referring doctor to provide supportive information and for the medical aids, or the clients' workplace.

A clinical psychologist has to have a working knowledge and understanding not only of the emotions, behaviours, and cognitions but also medical knowledge to allow for the holistic treatment of the patient. Based on their theoretical framework like psychoanalytical, behavioural, etc. they would render psychotherapy. There are a number of therapeutic tools that can be utilised. They use it for the best psychological health of their patients.

I should inform you that in the past my use of technology for therapy was minimal. It was limited to the telephonic contact, WhatsApp messages for confirmation of appointments, messages between patients and I and an online billing system. I do belong to online platform which has my credentials for referral purposes.

In terms of my patients' utilisation of technology, I have only 2 male clients who were over 25 years who used the internet to view pornography and the rest of the clients used the information for educational purposes; - to enquire about their illness and treatment options. So, my previous experience for therapy has been restricted for educational and logistics purposes. Currently, But, due to health concerns and restrictions because of the effects of the Corona virus there is an increase in the use of technology, the virtual world, which I now use for tele-therapy.

Q: Explain what verbal and non-verbal communication is, and the role of communication in the 21st century? Explain.

Communication comprises of both verbal and non-verbal communication. The use of speech comprises of verbal communication. This includes words, phrases, and sentences. Within an interaction verbal communication

requires the use of common language, and the skills required to speak and understanding the language. In face-to-face contact between non-verbal communication contributes 80 – 90 %is when interpreting communication. So being able to interpret non-verbal signals in communication becomes important.

Non-verbal communication is mostly silent but can include sounds. It includes the observation and responses thereof. The use of body language, eye contact, gestures, signals, posture, facial expressions, tone, pitch, volume of voice, eye gaze, etc.

With the advent of technology (telephone, television, mobile phones, and computers the methods of communication changes from primarily being face-to-face to now virtual platforms. Advances with the internet and development of applications have facilitated global links to communication. It provides instantaneous communication through the use of emails, SMSs, WhatsApp, face time, video calls etc. It allows for instant responses decreasing waiting times for responses; decreasing the need for face-to-face contact. If it's not face-to-face contact, the reliance now increases to interpreting tone, pitch, volume, etc. of voice and content. Video calls allow for the continued non-verbal interpretation.

Due to Covid-19 the current lockdown has increased the reliance of virtual contact. People are now legally bound to stay indoors with minimum exposure outside of their homes. As a result, individuals are separated from their families and their loved ones. The virtual world provides a platform to interact with their loved ones. Technology has increased contact through the means of a virtual platform. This decreases their isolation and loneliness. The work environment has changed as well. Corporates are increasing their use of the virtual platform. Globally emergency and essential personal have been using the virtual platform to keep in touch with their patients to continue to administer care. Psychologists are undertaking the same allowing for ongoing care and continued support during this pandemic.

Q: In your opinion, is there real cause for concern with regards to verbal and non-verbal communication amongst digital millennials in KwaZulu-Natal?

Yes, there are some concerns. The 28-25 years have grown up with the exposure to new and current technology. As opposed to the older generation who had to learn skills in order to keep up. But depends on the means of communication (example being messages and emails) it becomes difficult to know what the other person non-verbal signals are. So, the interpretation is based purely on content. With the increased use of these forms of communication there is a danger of losing our skills with the interpretation non-verbal communication. Face-to-face communication with the help of interpreting body language, eye gaze, posture, etc. Helps in integrating all the information and then respond.

On the other hand, we have seen the advantages of technology. In the current climate of Covid-19 it is facilitating continued education, care to patients/clients, socialising with others when isolated. So, we have to take the good with the bad.

Q: What are the positive and negative impacts of digital technology? Explain.

Negative impact is the loss of skills in interpretation of non-verbal communication, which can be caused by use of messages and emails. An increased dependency on strangers for their self-esteem and self-worth. Previously magazines would inform the public of what they should look like, dress, act like etc. but now it's instantaneous on the internet. You get immediate feedback about what you look like etc. Requiring affirmations from strangers instead of developing it on your own or within a small circle who love and care for you. Positive impact is that it provides an educational platform encouraging the learning of new skills. Socially keeping distant relatives and friends in touch with each other. Also help increased ability to communicate on a global scale, socialising on a global scale, sharing of ideas etc. Exposure of topics of interest that need to be addressed and obtaining large scale support even on a global basis, for example, banning of plastic and black lives matter.

Q: Do you feel the advancement and usage of online social media platforms has affected the digital millennials?

Somewhat – The last 25 to 18 years, especially in South Africa with the introduction of democracy for all of its people, the digital millennials have seen great advancements in technology. Many of them have grown up with technology. They have been trained in a new form of communication. This exposure ensured that they learnt to use the digital platforms for their own uses. The number of social media applications now available ensures that they can be constantly in touch with someone and them with you. It does not matter if it's close friends and family. It could be strangers. Socially it allows them to feel part of a bigger community and they are not alone.

Rural communities are now connected to the rest of the country. That is of course if they have access to technology. It expands their community.

Specifically, with psychology patients, investigating their diagnosis or concerns online can help to ease their anxiety and free them from their isolation. They can see that they are not alone or being punished with their diagnosis. They have evidence that their symptoms are not limited to only them, but others experience the same. This can provide reassurance that they are not alone and being discriminated or punished because of their diagnosis. So technology can be education, by helping patients to increase their knowledge and understanding of their symptoms and treatment. Therapy can be supported by online support groups etc. where patients get to exchange information and ideas, enquire about their illness/diagnosis, get support from others and not be isolated. They can participate in their own therapeutic process.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions to the 18 to 25 generation in South Africa? If yes, how and why?

Firstly, my speciality is not medical so I can surmise that there will be some fallouts. Long hours spent online, resulting in being hunched over your phone, laptop etc. can have a detrimental effect on your posture and eyesight. Joint pains come to mind with the constant typing. A sedentary lifestyle has health implications whereas there is not much mobility or exercises can lead to increased weight, changes in sleep patterns etc.

With regards to the social impact it can be two-fold. These young adults are entering the next phase of their lives. Probably finished Grade 12 and then embarking on tertiary education or even the job market. Unsupervised, away from home, having to make their own decisions, judgements, etc. They will interact in a more demanding environment which requires them to make adult decisions away from the advice of their loved one's supervision and possibly advice. Their moral compass is no longer guided by their families but by their peers. The pressure of fitting in, adopting a certain appearance, etc. They may seek to gain affirmations from others who may not have their best interest in mind. The worst-case scenario is recalling incidents where school children were exposing themselves with nude photos of themselves, paedophiles were targeting children etc. These platforms can be used to take revenge. There is a permanency with the online records. These young adults may be unaware that even for job interviews their social media pages can be scrutinised. It may not matter how much they have changed since it can jeopardise their future prospects.

On the positive side following positive role models can be encouraging for this age group to strive, to better themselves and to be strong. That they can overcome adversity and reach their dreams. For some adults who are shy they can improve their social life by being on these platforms and increase the number of friends/acquaintances that they have. It can provide online support groups. They can socialise with strangers who don't know them

Q: Are you aware of any social or medical implications of over-usage of online social media platforms that are being investigated? Currently none.

Q: Has your work situation changed because of the rise of digital media?

My working situation has changed due to the restrictions and the health implications of Corona Virus. I had to change to an online platform to interact with my patients. Many patients mentioned that they will return for therapy when the lockdown ends. Others continued with the online platform. Their needs have to be met. Services provided by NGOs that I belong to are using online platforms to render therapeutic services. So that means a change in the administration and the type of therapeutic relationship. It is no longer face-to-face but an online two-dimensional presence.

Q: Do you think medical professionals like yourself are seeing more cases of social breakdowns in families due to an indirect or director impact of social media usage on the younger generation?

As I mentioned above, I have limited clientele whose breakups had been due to the impact of social media.

My colleges have observed that there is an increase in the breakdown of family time with the use of technology, where family interaction is limited. People are sitting on their devices like laptops, phones etc. and watch in g, marriage breakups due to the addictions to pornography, easily accessible online 'hook-ups', etc. I cannot quote you statistics.

Q: Do you believe there are advantages to digital millennials using online social media platforms?

We cannot stop the advancement and use of technology. We have to either join this or get left behind. This generation have grown up with technology and use it, whether to their advantage or disadvantage. Our world has extended and become global. You can sit in your office and supervise someone in Japan or USA. Meetings can happen online, without the need to travel, etc.

Right now, it becomes difficult to mention too many disadvantages like the loss of communication skills, loss of face-to-face contact, not having real friends, but online people who are strangers etc. The virus and government legislation discourages socialising and close contact. They are recommending social distancing making it advantageous to use social media and online platforms.

ENDS

Female, Clinical Psychologist, who has given many talks and presentations at events and on radio; she is very active on Instagram and has a following of more than 10K.

Q: Please provide a brief description of your profession and your field of expertise?

I am a clinical psychologist. My scope of practice involves dealing with severe psychopathology and individuals with mental and personality disorders.

Q: Explain what verbal and non-verbal communication is, and the role of communication in the 21st century? Explain.

Non-verbal: Communication such as eye contact, facial expression, gestures, etc.

Verbal communication: Use of words to express self.

Communication is important because the flow of information is significant for information and understanding. Being able to communicate effectively is able to help misunderstanding and establish assertive boundaries in relationships.

Q: In your opinion, is there real cause for concern with regards to verbal and non-verbal communication amongst digital millennials in KZN?

Yes – People are not able to communicate effectively as digital media has a tendency to socially segregate people.

Q: What are the positive and negative impacts of digital technology? Explain

Digital technology is fast and effective. However, it decreases the human aspects and emotional aspect of existence. There is less emotion in digital technology as there would be with an eye to contact. Psychologist is able to thoroughly clinically assess patients in face-to-face contact.

Q: Do you feel the advancement and usage of online social media platforms has affected the digital millennials?

Yes – Millennials have become out of touch with many aspects of daily mundane and more preoccupies with social media. Many teens have lost themselves in order to succumb to societal norms and expectations of society.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions to the 18 to 25 generation in South Africa? If yes, how and why?

Yes – Social media has become a vehicle of indoctrination for many negative dilemmas and has exposed young people to a world of convenience but also exposed the young people to negative content in the form of music videos, TV shows, etc.

Q: Are you aware of any social or medical implications of over-usage of online social media platforms that are being investigated?

No

Q: Has your work situation changed because of the rise of digital media?

Yes – Having to adapt to digital and virtual psychotherapy has been difficult to adjust and adapt to. It has also contributed to a loss of clientele because many patients cannot afford data for virtual therapy. This means a decline in the practice clientele.

Q: Do you think medical professionals like yourself are seeing more cases of social breakdowns in families due to an indirect or director impact of social media usage on the younger generation?

Yes – Many black traditional families struggle to come to terms with the changes that they see on the younger generation allegedly due to media. This also includes confusion due to the younger generations' sexual orientation and dress code. There are so many families who struggle with psychosocial stressors and the management of this. They also are paralysed with regards to coping mechanisms and not seeking assistance.

Q: Do you believe there are advantages to digital millennials using online social media platforms?

Yes, the enhancement of effective security and privacy concerns eradicated as files are encrypted.

Q: How do you see the future of communication through online social media platforms in the digital age?

There will be a social disconnect, going forward.

Q: Do you use social media for your profession? If so, how often?

Yes, virtual therapy has now become a safer method for psychotherapy.

Q: Do you think parents understand the impact digital technology has on the younger generation?

Parents will understand if they are exposed to digital media in their settings. Traditional parents may not understand due to lack of awareness.

Q: Should there be boundaries and monitoring of the usage of social media by parents? If so, how often and from what age?

Yes – Many social media programmes are not age-restricted and this may have negative impacts on the youth as young people tend to imitate many things they see on the social media.

Q: In your opinion, do millennials possess any traits of narcissistic personalities because of social media usage? If so, elaborate?

Although exposure to social media does not have an empirical link to narcissistic personality diagnosis, the disorder can be linked to environmental mismatches which may be due to exposure to social media.

ENDS

<u>**INTERVIEWEE Psychologist 5**</u>

Psychologist, Student Counselling.

Q: Please provide a brief description of your profession and your field of expertise?

I am a counselling psychologist and I am the Acting Senior Psychologist at a University of Technology's Student Counselling and Health Department. We assist students with personal, academic and career-related concerns. We offer a confidential counselling service which of this year, 2020, has been done online. So that has been quite and adjustment for us, and we have gotten into it, it has been a beneficial way of assisting a student and that is something we will probable carry on doing in the near future, which is an online platform.

Q: Explain what is verbal and non-verbal communication is, and the role of communication in the 21st century? Explain.

Verbal communication is the actual words that can be written or spoken and the Non-verbal communication is about the body language, so for example, a person's facial expression, eye contact, their tone of voice, their postures, etc. research has shown that when we communicate with someone, the actual message consists mainly of your non-verbal which I think is about 80% and 20% is verbal. So, I really think when we communicate, that your non-verbal communication body language is so important.

Culture is really important, so communication is very context dependent. For example, with non-verbal communication, maybe in the non-western cultures, for example the African culture, little eye contact is more valued and seen as a sign of respect, whereas in the more western culture, not giving eye contact may be seen as you being rude or not respecting a person. So I think culture is really important when we exploring communication. And for communication, with regards to the 21st century, communication involves the interacting with people and the sharing of information, and we now in the 4th industrial revolution where the usage of digital technology has been utilised, for example, the social media platforms, etc., to communicate with people. And especially this year with Covid-19, that has changed the dynamics of communication, and communication has taken the form of digital technology and it's less in person. And this has sped up the fourth industrial revolution, we are now all forced to use these digital platforms, etc., we might not have been using for example, last year, or the year before. Social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom and Instagram are being used. In the world of work, Microsoft Teams, so I think in the terms of the 21st century, communication is really now utilised more on the various platforms to interact. That's kind of my thoughts on that.

Q: Have u seen increase of millennials reaching out for help in terms of impact?

Definitely, I have noticed a lot more people are anxious, maybe people have lost jobs, students are finding it hard to study in terms of online, so I have definitely have noted a lot of anxiety amongst everyone. The young adults because of their age and they are used to using technology more, we have found students are utilising more of our service through the online platform. And it is something that they prefer.

I think there are pros and cons. It is always useful to see them face-to-face, but we seeing them face-to-face online but in terms that we don't see their whole body. In terms of your non-verbal, we might not be able to see their arms, or how their legs are crossed. You know all those things we look at, but I have found that the students are utilising the services and they prefer, however, I do think there needs to be a proper study on it but they do prefer to use the online platform to seek assistance. The online platform is seen to be a more convenient platform for them so that they can sit in their residence room and literally just click a button and now you having your online counselling session.

In terms of privacy, we had to ensure that we use the right platform, so as psychologists we have to use platforms that ensure privacy of information and that are compliant, but I think more so for the student, they not so concerned about privacy but more around convenience. And if they have access to Wi-Fi and data, they will use an online service.

Q: What are the positive and negative impacts of digital technology? Explain.

Some of the positives rely for social connection, even across the world I think that is really important. If you think about it during this Covid-19 time even though people have been on lockdown, it allowed people to still socially connect which I think is really important for your mental health, relationships and having contact is

really important. And if we did not have technology I can't imagine how people would have reacted to this lockdown, and it allows for information to be shared and we now have started an online support group so we can utilise it for that kind of dynamic.

There is also now all these virtual apps to track your sleep and health etc., and when we with a student and they struggling to maybe sleep for example, we can say have you thought of using this app to track your sleep and we can go through it in our next session, so I think there are a lot of positives in terms of technology.

However, there is also some negativity in terms of, yes it allows for social connection but only on a virtual level. In terms of a physical connection, obviously that doesn't allow for it and its shown to influence the children and teenagers social skills, it could negatively impact on their social skills and there's also an addictive element, so your Facebook, Instagram and your online gaming, especially around teenagers and children, because your brain is still developing, the parent has to set a kind of limit or there wasn't a limit I'm sure a young teen or young adult can be on their phones and online gaming forever, so there is an addictive element.

Also your physical activity declines which in turn impacts on your physical health because you not moving as much, sitting in front of your laptop all day and your mental health –can affect your neuropathways in your brain which can cause depression, anxiety, sleeping problems, etc.so for example, it can also affect your memory, so you reliant on this app, platform to help you remember information in your brain, so I'm relying on this calendar, so eventually in my brain I don't need to use my memory much so that's going to affect the development of your memory.

Some studies have shown that even some your brain structures will shrink from using technology so much so it does have an impact on your brain development. I think with kids, I know in schools they having to use IPADS and things like that in learning and occupational therapists have found that the handwriting has been affected so their motor skills have been impacted on.

I think parents do understand that social media is a cause of concern but if you think about it in your everyday life and now especially during Covid-19 time parents are now working at home and almost rely on giving your teenager your phone to keep them busy so you can have your meeting at work. I think they are aware but again it comes down to it's an easy distraction, it's convenient, I think it's all something we each need to be aware of. There does need to be a time limit, time for connecting face-to-face, you can't just connect virtually, so there needs to be those measures put in place to reduce these negatives of technology.

Q: Detox clinics?

I definitely think it's coming, for example in our diagnostic manual for psychology, there is a gaming disorder that's being considered to be included and I think during this Covid-19 time a lot of people are working non-stop online and they struggling to have boundaries and set limits etc. We might see an increase in burnout, for example, you might see an increase in an addictive element around technology.

There is no such detox clinic in South Africa as far as I know but I do think that it is something that will probably be here soon. So it's now become normalised and we used to checking our work emails for example, 24/7; and no boundaries that is going to become a problem now during Covid-19.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Psychologist 6

Intern Psychologist, Counselling and Health.

Q: Please provide a brief description of your profession and your field of expertise.

I am currently registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPSCA) as an intern counselling psychologist at University of Technology. My field of expertise is especially as a counselling psychologist to deal with life-transitioning issues such as adjusting students from school to student life.

I do use social media on a regular basis as I am on Facebook, Instagram and Pin interest-more keeping up to date with certain social issues. I do have an ambivalent stance towards social media platforms to keep people connected. Personally, I feel there is so much time I waste on social media, I have a bit of an ambivalent approach to it. I watched the new Netflix 2020 documentary called the Social Dilemma, directed by Jeff Orlowski and written by Orlowski, Davis Coombe, and Vickie Curtis, was showcased on Netflix in September 2020, I thought it was brilliant really value my privacy so I don't like the idea of the image of the documentary had put forward which did not sit well with me.

Q: What is your definition verbal, non-verbal communication?

Verbal communication is the content that is communicated through language, for example, a text message that would contain verbal communication, I'm talking to you and you would understand. Non-verbal communication is the non-speech related component of communication, so its tone, body language, conveying the emotional things as well.

Q: During Covid-19, do u think communication skills heightened or not?

I would definitely say that Covid-19 has taught us to turn to digital platforms on social media to meet our communication and social needs because we are social be beings. Quite literally we need to be in constant communication with other people and identify on a social level. I think in that sense it has provided a lot of utility in this context, by providing to be able to meet with friends and family digitally which is not the face-to face we would be used to do so. At the same time, I think we do lose out on a lot of the human or personal nature of that contact. For me, having a Zoom call with my grandparents is nowhere near having a cup of tea with them face-to-face.

Q: Do you see more anxiety during Covid-19; do think this visible more so?

I think that at the moment there is an acute awareness for emotional and health issues, so more people are aware and identifying and seeing themselves with certain issues. On the other hand, I think that there are, especially the younger generation. I got a younger brother with a school for a number of years; especially the scope of social media and the role in had played. For me, social media is limiting you not getting the full range of expression of verbal and non-verbal.

Positives: For example, my parents were able to attend their friend's daughters' wedding in Greece virtually by Zoom; that was quite a special moment because they witnessed and participate in a special moment. For myself in my personal space, being able to connect with my friends through social media during Covid-19.

Q: The negatives of social media

I would say sometimes people are more preoccupied with what is happening in the outside world more than in the real world. I'm concerned about issues about cyber bulling, child protection; we need to think about being safe online.

Q: In terms of identifying new social disorders in the 4th industrial revolution? Yes, there has been some research that has already done into social addiction (refer to: https://www.addictioncenter.com/drugs/social-media-addiction/ and https://cyberpsychology.eu/article/view/11562/10373).

There is that potential of addictive potential of digital technology.

Q: How do you do you see the future in terms of the amount of time spent by millennials on social media?

I do feel there is cause for concern, and going forward, if we don't watch out we could have a problem on our hands and it could affect our mental health. Spending a lot of time on social media, especially for people who… that's how they get their interaction. One of my concerns would be that you can be so quick to start comparing yourself to other people; that constant comparison can be depressing because all you can see is other people's positive aspects of their lives, and you constantly checking and comparing, am I good enough? You feel lack esteem. How much we judge our self-worth based on the number of likes we get. What is a like? I don't remember what I liked on Instagram yesterday, but for someone else who did like a post; it had a value to them. For me, pressing like, it was nothing; I think it can create a massive social dilemma on a mental health level. I would personally love to see more of an awareness on a social level.

END

APPENDIX H: TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH MILLENNIALS

<u>**INTERVIEWEE Millennial 1**</u>

Male, 23-year old, obtained his ND: Engineering Electrical (Instrumentation) in 2020; he aims to further his studies upon completion of his Bachelor of Technology (BTech), which is at the end of 2020. He wants to find employment in a position as a junior technician or graduate in training, thereafter he will pursue his Master's degree.

Q: How often do you use the Internet?

I use the internet every day and most of the time.

Q: If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel? Explain.

I will go through a lot of negative emotions. I will feel board and disappointed, since it's available I will feel upset that I am not able to access or use digital tech.

Q: How many hours do you spend on social media platforms on an average per day? 10+ hours

Q: Which social media platforms do you frequent and why?

WhatsApp – to communicate with friends and family that are close to me.

Facebook – All my friends are on it; to see my friend's photos; to see memes; I spend about half an hour to 1 hour on Facebook most of my time is on WhatsApp.

LinkedIn – to find a job.

Instagram – to see pictures of beautiful people and to watch funny videos.

Q: Do you prefer chatting on online social media platforms to having verbal communication with family or friends?

I prefer verbal communication with friends and family.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role in society? Explain.

Positive – People can communicate faster and more efficient with one and other. We'll know each another's whereabouts. We can learn new things. We can find inspiration. We can get to know someone better. We can communicate with anyone in the world.

People that use the media for wrongful deeds make social media negative.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has played a positive or negative role on your verbal communication skills?

Positive – with features that digital technology has such as: the ability to make phone calls, voice calls, video calls and record ourselves lets me practice and use my verbal communication skills over the phone or on a computer or laptop.

I can find videos on how to learn verbal communication skills on YouTube.

Q: Who are your favourite local and international celebrities that you follow (if any) and why?

International: Kate Miccuci, I like her voice and her looks.

Locally I follow M K Angajan for inspiration and for learning good habits to live life.

Q: Do you enjoy taking 'selfies' and posting them online?

No I don't.

Q: If yes, how often do you do this? N/A

Q: Do you enjoy posting comments or pictures more, or both equally, on online social media platforms?

I enjoy commenting more on a photo. I comment on my friend's photo most of the time compared to someone I don't know.

Q: Would you say you have more friends personally (physically) or on online social media platforms?

I have more online because I think it's not much work than been friends physically in person. With a click of a button, by sending text messages it doesn't require must effort to be friends online.

Q: How important is it for you to have friends online?

Not that important to me on a scale 1 to 10. I will say about 3.

Q: Is there a selection criterion you follow before choosing a friend online? Yes.

Q: Do you prefer having more local or international friends, and why?

I prefer having local friends because it feels that we are near. I get the feeling that we are from the same country we are more connected. Visiting the person will be possible one day.

Q: How do you balance your time on social media platforms with your education or job?

I spend less time on social media and give more to my priorities first.

Q: What do you perceive as being the benefits of using online social media platforms?

Gaining knowledge and finding inspiration, entertaining ourselves and communicating with friends and family.

Q: How do you see your future in the digital age after studying and entering the work environment?

I see myself using only technology to do my job. Since I studied electronic engineering, I see that tech will be a massive part of my job. Whether using a printer, a computer or repairing an electronic flow meter. Without tech my field cannot function as it does.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you, or do you know of anyone who has experienced this?

I don't know the effects of it or anyone that was affected. But it could damage my eye sign since it's my eyes that take the strain.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on your verbal communication skills, your mentality, social skills or scholastic life? Positive

Q: Do you know what narcissism means?

No I don't. I thought about searching the internet to find its meaning.

Q: How important is it for you to be liked on online social media platforms?

Not that important to me. I don't mind been liked thought because it's a good feeling.

Q: Do you feel any negative thoughts when you do not get a 'like' on social media after posting online?

Yes, I do after a while I will not feel any negative emotions after saying to myself: "I understand a good content gets lots of likes". So I look at my content I'm putting out. And improve in the next one I post.

Q: Do you feel the advancement of social media has affected you as an individual? No I don't.

Q: How have you responded to this phenomenon of being digital savvy in the 21st century?

I keep up with new tech and purchase cost saving devices.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal is talking using mouth nonverbal can be body language or on screen without hearing or seeing the person.

Q: Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert, and why?

Introvert I keep to myself and I don't talk to many people.

Q: There have been reports through the media of selfie deaths. Do you think this is a matter of concern or do you agree that having the perfect selfie posted online is necessary, no matter the consequences?

It should be a matter of concern because taking out the perfect selfie is insufficient to justify the importance of someone's life.

Q: If you did not have access to digital technology, what would you do with your time?

I'll play outside, read a book and do exercise more often.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Millennial 2

Female, 23-years old, obtained her ND in Architectural Technology in 2020; she aims to obtain her Master's degree in Architecture and thereafter own an architectural practice that specialises in high-rise Architecture and eco-friendly urban designs.

Q: How often do you use the Internet? Every day.

Q: If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel? Explain.

I will be frustrated because it has become an essential to my daily living.

Q: How many hours do you spend on social media platforms on an average day?

2 to 4 hours a day.

Q: Which social media platforms do you frequent and why?

The social media platform I use on a daily basis is WhatsApp because it is the easiest and fastest way to communicate to my family, friends and colleagues.

Q: Do you prefer chatting on online social media platforms to having verbal communication with family or friends?

I prefer having verbal communication with my family and friends however due to a busy lifestyle I do not get to see them as often as I wish to.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role in society? Explain.

I would have to say it has played a positive role in society in terms of easy and fast communication ad well as it is a reliable source of obtaining news and important information.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has played a positive or negative role on your verbal communication skills?

It has played a positive impact on my verbal communication skills because I am able to socialise more and communicate with all my friends and family.

Q: If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel? Explain.

I will be frustrated because it has become an essential to my daily living.

Q: Who are your favourite local and international celebrities that you follow (if any) and why?

I do not follow celebrities on social media because I feel that the lifestyle they live is superficial to me and I do not want to get involved in mimicking a lifestyle that is farfetched which is something people do when they follow famous people on social media.

Q: Do you enjoy taking 'selfies' and posting them online?

Yes, I do but I post them very seldom.

Q: If yes, how often do you do this?

I may post a selfie once or twice every month.

Q: Do you enjoy posting comments or pictures more, or both equally, on online social media platforms? I enjoy posting pictures more.

Q: Would you say you have more friends personally (physically) or on online social media platforms?

I have more friends personally merely because I am a university student so it is easier to have friends that I can be with physically.

Q: How important is it for you to have friends online? It is not that important to me.

Q: Is there a selection criterion you follow before choosing a friend online?

Yes. It must either be a person I know or a person that I have mutual friends with.

Q: Do you prefer having more local or international friends, and why?

Local because I am able to see and hang out with them anytime I want to.

Q: How do you balance your time on social media platforms with your education or job?

There is a certain time of the day which I am on social media and it is generally in the afternoons when I am done with my campus work.

Q: What do you perceive as being the benefits of using online social media platforms?

Firstly, it is a fast and easy way to communicate and secondly it is a source of information and advertisement which is beneficial to me.

Q: How do you see your future in the digital age after studying and entering the work environment?

As an architectural student, I rely on digital technology such as my computer in order for me to carry out my work therefore it is important to me.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you, or do you know of anyone who has experienced this?

As seen with a relative, if you do not manage the time spent on social media, it will consume all your time and you will not have time for important things in your life.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on your verbal communication skills, your mentality, social skills or scholastic life?

It has impacted me positively because I am able to keep a connection with family and friends even if I do not see them for long periods of time.

Q: Do you know what narcissism means?

Yes, I do. It is a person that has an excessive liking towards themselves.

Q: How important is it for you to be liked on online social media platforms?

It is not important to me; I use social media for the benefit of keeping up with latest news and trends.

Q: Do you feel any negative thoughts when you do not get a 'like' on social media after posting online?

No, I have not experienced that.

Q: Do you feel the advancement of social media has affected you as an individual?

Yes, because I rely on it to be in contact with people and if it did not exist, keeping a good relationship with family and friends would be difficult.

Q: How have you responded to this phenomenon of being digital savvy in the 21st century?

I have always upgraded to the level of technological advancement to be up to date and in the norm of digital technology.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

I think verbal communication means having a conversation with a person either on a phone call or in person and non-verbal communication is communicating with a person through texting.

Q: Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert, and why?

I am an introvert because I lead a private life and I have a small group of people that I thoroughly enjoy being around.

Q: There have been reports through the media of selfie deaths. Do you think this is a matter of concern or do you agree that having the perfect selfie posted online is necessary, no matter the consequences?

No, I believe that before posting a selfie, one needs to question if that selfie will cause that person to lose his/her dignity by revealing too much of themselves or not, and they should only post it if it does not make him/her lose their dignity.

Q: If you did not have access to digital technology, what would you do with your time?

I would spend more time doing art and watching television.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Millennial 3

Female, 23-years old, achieved the Dean's Merit awards in her Bachelor of the Built Environment in Urban and Regional Planning in 2020; she is currently working as a part-time tutor for first and second year students, and aims to become a project manager, environmental planner or a GIS specialist.

Q: How often do you use the Internet?

I use the internet up to about 3 hours a day.

Q: If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel? Explain

I would honestly feel lost. I rely on digital technology for almost everything. Technology makes lives easier and without it, I would struggle and it would take me longer to complete my daily tasks.

Q: How many hours do you spend on social media platforms on an average per day?

I spend about 4 hours on social media platforms per day.

Q: Which social media platforms do you frequent and why?

I use Instagram because I follow a lot of celebrities and I want to know what is going on in their lives. I also follow environmental pages as this is something that interests me.

I use WhatsApp often as I want to keep in contact with my friends and loved ones.

Q: Do you prefer chatting on online social media platforms to having verbal communication with family or friends?

I prefer having verbal communication with family and friends as chatting online creates many misunderstandings and is not the same as having a verbal conversation with someone. I prefer to see the person and see their reaction, emotions and hear the tone of their voice. It is much more meaningful.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role in society? Explain.

I feel social media has played a positive role in society. Due to social media we are able to educate ourselves on current issues, globally and locally. If used for the correct purposes, we are able to create awareness about environmental issues such as climate change. Platforms such as Instagram are great as we can actually donate money to a worthy cause.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has played a positive or negative role on your verbal communication skills?

Digital Technology has played a positive role in my verbal communication skills. I read many online books, educational articles and watch documentaries.

Q: Who are your favourite local and international celebrities that you follow (if any) and why?

International – Virat Kohli, David Warner: I love cricket!

Priyanka Chopra: She inspires me.

Local – Siya Kolisi: I love the charity work that he does; he inspires me

Q: Do you enjoy taking 'selfies' and posting them online? No

Q: If yes, how often do you do this? -

Q: Do you enjoy posting comments or pictures more, or both equally, on online social media platforms?

 No

Q: Would you say you have more friends personally (physically) or on online social media platforms?

Personally

Q: How important is it for you to have friends online?

To me, having friends online is not important at all. I prefer having personal relationships with friends and family in person.

Q: Is there a selection criterion you follow before choosing a friend online?

Yes, I have to know this person or have met them before.

Q: Do you prefer having more local or international friends, and why?

Local friends – I just feel more at ease and safer.

Q: How do you balance your time on social media platforms with your education or job?

I allocate time for social media and my education. Although it is difficult, I try my best to stick to my specific times.

Q: What do you perceive as being the benefits of using online social media platforms?

I am able to connect to the outside world and learn about what is happening outside of my home. Social media platforms are used to create awareness of global and local issues. It can be used to see what people are up to, especially friends.

Q: How do you see your future in the digital age after studying and entering the work environment?

With technological advancements and entering the 4th industrial revolution, I would think that a large part of my future would be centred around using digital technology. I would be using it in the workplace and at home. The digital age will play a pivotal role in my work environment. The digital age will definitely reshape government, education, healthcare and commerce- almost every aspect of life.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you, or do you know of anyone who has experienced this?

I know of many people who seek approval from others on social media. They get offended if people do not like their pictures or if they do not get a certain number of likes on a picture. They actually become depressed and let it affect their personal life. They feel they aren't beautiful enough. They also see other girl's pictures and wish they looked like that instead of being happy with the way they are.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on your verbal communication skills, your mentality, social skills or scholastic life?

It has impacted positively. My social skills and especially my scholastic life have improved drastically.

Q: Do you know what narcissism means?

It is a condition whereby people are obsessed with themselves or feel superior to others.

Q: How important is it for you to be liked on online social media platforms?

It is not important at all. It doesn't really matter whether or not I am liked on social media. I feel people portray a different image of who they are than what they actually are, just to be liked. They change who they are just so people will like them. People are not as perfect as they seem to be.

Q: Do you feel any negative thoughts when you do not get a 'like' on social media after posting online?

No I don't. If someone does not want to like my post, then it is their personal choice. I cannot force someone to like my post and I refuse to become upset because I did not get a like on a picture!

Q: Do you feel the advancement of social media has affected you as an individual?

Yes, definitely. It helps me in many aspects of my life.

Q: How have you responded to this phenomenon of being digital savvy in the 21st century?

I have a positive response to being digitally savvy. Being digitally savvy is the way to go in the 21st century. If you don't know how to use technology, you will be left out.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal communication is when you use words to communicate with someone. Nonverbal communication is when you communicate with someone without words.

Q: Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert, and why?

I would describe myself as an introvert. I am fairly quiet until I feel comfortable around someone. I don't crave attention and I am a very reliable person.

Q: There have been reports through the media of selfie deaths. Do you think this is a matter of concern or do you agree that having the perfect selfie posted online is necessary, no matter the consequences?

This is a huge matter of concern. People should not seek approval from others on whether or not they are good-looking or not. Not having the best selfie is not the end of the world.

Q: If you did not have access to digital technology, what would you do with your time?

I would spend more time with my family and friends. Maybe find a new hobby.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Millennial 4

Female, 24-years old, obtained her Diploma in Shipping and Logistics in 2020; she wants to continue working her way to the top in her career field and hopes to become a strong, fearless leader in the shipping world.

Q: How often do you use the Internet? Very often.

Q: If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel?

Stuck on a planet that made no sense everything is about technology as everything can be found on the internet.

Q: How many hours do you spend on social media platforms on an average per day?

12   hours roughly; it could be more but this is staggered.

Q: Which social media platforms do you frequent and why?

Instagram – I like baking and they have recipes that people post looking at shipping posts it helps me know what's going on.

Q: Do you prefer chatting on online social media platforms to having verbal communication with family or friends?

I do like online as my family is far and hard to actually have a verbal communication... I would say sometimes I would enjoy a verbal conversation.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role in society?

Good and Bad basis my opinion... There are positives likes easy to find jobs, increasing your general knowledge understand other cultures... bad we lose touch of physical contact with other human beings... And also people can stalk you on social media.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has played a positive or negative role on your verbal communication skills?

Negative – Because you forget how to talk to someone else example sitting at a restaurant for supper with your family and people at the table, posting pictures of their food instead of eating it.... Its minimises verbal communication and positive you have Microsoft Teams which allows you to verbally interact with others in your company and people from other companies... I'm on the fence on this one.

Q: Who are your favourite local and international celebrities that you follow (if any) and why?

I do not follow anybody.

Q: Do you enjoy taking 'selfies' and posting them online? No, but I do take selfies.

Q: Do you enjoy posting comments or pictures more, or both equally, on online social media platforms?

I prefer posting pictures with captions.

Q: Would you say you have more friends personally (physically) or on online social media platforms?

Physically.

Q: Do you prefer having more local or international friends, and why?

International friends – I like different cultures...

Q: How do you balance your time on social media platforms with your education or job? Just fine.

Q: What do you perceive as being the benefits of using online social media platforms?

Keeps you updated with trends, news and what people are up to; most of all, adds to your general knowledge.

Q: How do you see your future in the digital age after studying and entering the work environment?

It can be challenging but can be good as getting your tasks done become easier... I did not grow up with much technology...

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you, or do you know of anyone who has experienced this?

Yeah, I guess u stay in house all day do not want to get out also your eyesight can deteriorate. But I do not know anyone has experienced medical issues.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on your verbal communication skills, your mentality, social skills or scholastic life?

I personally do not feel any difference.

Q: Do you know what narcissism means? Yes

Q: How important is it for you to be liked on online social media platforms?

I do not actually care who likes me and who does not.

Q: Do you feel any negative thoughts when you do not get a 'like' on social media after posting online?

No

Q: Do you feel the advancement of social media has affected you as an individual? No

Q: How have you responded to this phenomenon of being digital savvy in the 21st century? Exceptionally.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal – Can be walking to someone, and talking non-verbal can be emails.

Q: Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert, and why?

Extrovert – I can interact by any forms of communication; sometimes I can be an introvert; all dependent on my moods.

Q: There have been reports through the media of selfie deaths. Do you think this is a matter of concern or do you agree that having the perfect selfie posted online is necessary, no matter the consequences?

No I do not agree that is really outrageous, but for some people it's like a leech latched on to their mind and getting approval from the world which can never happen because we all think and act differently.

Q: If you did not have access to digital technology, what would you do with your time?

I think cook and bake and be outdoors... Also that's also if I was a millionaire /wink.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Millennial 5

Female, 24-years old, qualified Journalism graduate, registered for her Advanced Diploma in Journalism; she freelances for Environmental non-profit organisations in Durban.

Q: How often do you use the Internet?

I use the internet frequently. My day usually begins with me reading a news article on my phone from websites like IOL or News24. I use the internet for work purposes; this includes checking emails and using Google products like Google docs. During the day when I have a chance, I go on Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp. I also frequently use apps like Spotify to listen to music.

Q: How many hours do you spend on social media platforms on an average per day?

I usually use my Facebook and Instagram during my lunchtime and in the evenings. However, I check my WhatsApp messages more often. So, I would estimate that I spend collectively 3hrs a day on social media.

Q: Which social media platforms do you use frequent and why?

I frequently use Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. I hardly post on my Facebook and Instagram, but I enjoy seeing new posts from the pages that I follow. I also enjoy using WhatsApp because it is an easy way to message friends, family, and work colleagues.

Q: Do you prefer chatting on online social media platforms to having verbal communication with family or friends?

I enjoy verbal communication over online communication. I don't think online forms of communication can ever beat a verbal in person conversation with your loved ones.

Q: Who are your favourite local and international celebrities that you follow (if any) and why?

Some local celebrities that I follow include, Trevor Stuurman who is a multimedia visual artist, Koleka Putuma a South African writer and Ms Paula Bee a lifestyle personality. I like these pages because they inspire me and motivate me to adopt more creativity in my own lifestyle.

Some international celebrities I follow include Rachel Ama and Jenne Claiborne; they are both vegan cooks and give me inspiration for my own diet. I also follow some environmental activists like Greta Thunberg and Earthling Ed.

Q: Do you enjoy taking 'selfies' and posting them online?

I enjoy taking selfies when I feel like I'm 'dressed up', but I hardly post them online.

Q: Do you enjoy posting comments or pictures more, or both equally, on online social media platforms?

I enjoy posting comments on the posts of my friends and family, more than I enjoy posting pictures.

Q: Would you say you have more friends personally (physically) or on online social media platforms?

I have a small circle of people that I consider my friends 'physically'. Some of the people that I have online are individuals that I am well acquainted with and I enjoy following them, but I know that they are not my bosom friends. But to answer the question, I have more online friends than what I have in person.

Q: How important is it for you to have friends online?

It is not very important. Most of the time I go on social media to look at pages of things that interest me, i.e. recipes, crafts or TV series. On some days, I don't interact with anyone on social media, but just go online to look at specific things.

Q: Is there a selection criterion you follow before choosing a friend online?

Yes, I usually look at where the person is from, whether their page contains a common interest and if we are following a common person.

Q: Do you prefer having more local or international friends, and why?

Local, because we are more likely to have things in common.

Q: How do you balance your time on social media platforms with your education or job?

Social Media takes more of a backseat in my life because work occupies most of my time. I use it when I have free time, like during lunch or before bedtime. I would like to grow my social media presence more in the future; I think that the more time you invest the more influential your page has the potential to become.

Q: What do you perceive as being the benefits of using online social media platforms?

Social Media gives individuals a creative outlet where they have a platform to express themselves. People tend to showcase their artworks, photography skills, trendy fashion choices and even their humour. Furthermore, social media has created online communities and gives a facilitating platform for discussions on positive change in society. Moreover, social media gives us an ease of staying in touch with all our loved ones, even when we are apart.

Q: How do you see your future in the digital age after studying and entering the work environment?

My current job involves social media; I create posts for various days of significance. I also use online tools to allow for better collaboration and communication. I imagine that in the future most areas of work will be integrated into an online system. And that I will have to continually be learning how to use new technology.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you, or do you know of anyone who has experienced this?

I know that factors like cyber-bullying or unhealthy comparison may have repercussions on the self-esteem of individuals; however, I don't think this has affected me.

But I have experienced the physical impacts of being online for long hours, my eyesight often gets a bit blurry after staring at a screen for long hours, my posture is not aligned, and I don't feel energised.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on your verbal communication skills, your mentality, social skills or scholastic life?

I think it has had both positive and negative impacts on me.

Positives – Digital technology excites me, I want to learn how to use different things and it also inspires me to learn how to present my own work on these different platforms.

Negatives – I know that at times I tend to isolate myself more when using digital technology, instead of spending time with family and friends. I also feel more confident communicating with new people, when I use online communication tools instead of talking to them in person.

Q: Do you know what narcissism means?

When you are selfish or believe you are more important than others.

Q: How important is it for you to be liked on online social media platforms?

When I post something online, I do want people to like it. When people don't like your post, it almost feels like a rejection, especially when you've posted something personal like a piece of work. But in theory I know that

this is not the case, sometimes people don't like your post because they didn't see it. So I would say that it is relatively important for me to be liked on social media.

Q: Do you feel any negative thoughts when you do not get a 'like' on social media after posting online?

Yes, I get anxious because I wonder how people are perceiving my post.

Q: Do you feel the advancement of social media has affected you as an individual?

Yes, the work I do is dependent on social media and whatever I do in the future will in some way be dependent on social media.

Q: How have you responded to this phenomenon of being digital savvy in the 21ˢᵗ century?

I try to keep up with it, but I don't use every digital platform actively. I like to know how different online platforms work, in the case that I might need them for my professional development. But in my personal capacity, I don't think that it is necessary for me to be on every digital platform.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal communication involves expressing yourself by speaking or using words.

Non-verbal communication involves expressing yourself without the use of language, so this could be done through facial expressions and body language.

Q: Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert, and why?

I think I am a combination of both. Most of the time I am more reserved and tend to isolate myself. However, there are also times when I become more sociable and livelier.

Q: There have been reports through media of selfie deaths. Do you think this is a matter of concern or do you agree that having the perfect selfie posted online is necessary, no matter the consequences?

It is definitely a matter of concern! I also think that there is no such thing as 'perfect' and that people should rather strive to capture more authentic, loving, and honest moments.

Q: If you did not have access to digital technology, what would you do with your time?

I think I would be a more avid reader and a better cook.

Q: What have been your most memorable experiences with social media?

On my birthday every year, I get a lot of messages on social media from my friends and family. This always makes me feel really special.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role in society? I think there are both positive and negative aspects.

Positives – We have become a global community, we can communicate with each other so much easier and have free speech to discuss matters that are unjust. Negatives – Fake news, cyber-bullying and being detached from reality are all negatives to society.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has played a positive or negative role on your verbal communication skills?

Negative – Communicating online gives you a certain level of confidence because you are protected behind a screen. When I communicate in person, I sometimes feel more anxiety when I am meeting someone for the first time.

Q: If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel?

Digital technology is a privilege and it is something that has become a necessity in the work environment. If I did not have access to this, it would be much harder for me to do the everyday tasks that are required of me. And this would make me feel frustrated.

ENDS

<u>**INTERVIEWEE Millennial 6**</u>

Female, 20-years old, has a Diploma in Analytical Chemistry, presently studying towards her Advanced Diploma in Chemistry; she aims to obtain a job in a medical or pharmaceutical laboratory whereby her focus will be directed on medicinal or pharmaceutical chemistry.

Q: How often do you use the Internet?

I use the internet daily to carry out tasks.

Q: If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel? Explain.

I would feel despondent because digital technology has become a vital need for the modern era. It seems difficult to imagine a world without technology, but this isn't impossible as I was someone who was once able to live without digital technology when I was much younger. I am always reminded of the statement "We should control technology and not let technology control us" when I am asked this question.

Q: How many hours do you spend on social media platforms on an average per day?

I spend around a total of 4 hours per day on social media platforms.

Q: Which social media platforms do you frequent and why?

WhatsApp is my most frequently used social media platform because it is an easy and convenient application that enables one to connect with their family and friends. My second most used social media platform is LinkedIn as it enables me to connect with successful individuals in a similar field and find prospective jobs.

Q: Do you prefer chatting on online social media platforms to having verbal communication with family or friends?

I prefer having a verbal communication with family and friends.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role in society? Explain.

I strongly believe that social media has both a positive and negative role on society. Social media allows you to communicate with family and friends, meet new people, access educational sites and keep updated with the news. However, social media becomes a negative role when a person becomes addicted which leads to decreased social interaction and more self-isolation. Moreover, a person could become a victim to identity theft or cyber bullying. Finally, social media can lead to a person losing their self-confidence and esteem as they feel they are not good enough in the online world.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has played a positive or negative role on your verbal communication skills?

It has played a positive role on my communication skills whereby my vocabulary has enhanced, and I learnt new terminology.

Q: If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel? Explain.

I would feel despondent because digital technology has become a vital need for the modern era. It seems difficult to imagine a world without technology, but this isn't impossible as I was someone who was once able to live without digital technology when I was much younger. I am always reminded of the statement "We should control technology and not let technology control us" when I am asked this question.

Q: Who are your favourite local and international celebrities that you follow (if any) and why?

Locally, my favourite celebrity is Pearl Thusi as I was inspired by her determination to follow her dreams even when she was undermined and her boldness to share her good and bad experiences. Internationally, Joyce Meyer

and Steven Furtick are my favourite celebrities because they have changed the lives of many people even through technology and they also constantly encourage you to strive for greatness.

Q: Do you enjoy taking 'selfies' and posting them online? Yes, I do.

Q: If yes, how often do you do this? Very rarely.

Q: Do you enjoy posting comments or pictures more, or both equally, on online social media platforms?

I enjoy posting pictures more than comments. However, I do not post very often.

Q: Would you say you have more friends personally (physically) or on online social media platforms?

I have more friends online.

Q: How important is it for you to have friends online? This is not important to me.

Q: Is there a selection criterion you follow before choosing a friend online?

Yes, I usually choose a friend if I've met them before or if they are friends with somebody close to me.

Q: Do you prefer having more local or international friends, and why?

I prefer local friends because we have more things in common to discuss and I feel more comfortable around them.

Q: How do you balance your time on social media platforms with your education or job?

I usually ensure that all my tasks for the day are complete for my education before going onto social media platforms or I will occasionally go onto social media platforms during my free time.

Q: What do you perceive as being the benefits of using online social media platforms?

It allows you to communicate with family and friends, stay informed and updated on what is currently going on around you and it provides insight to the concepts you're unfamiliar with.

Q: How do you see your future in the digital age after studying and entering the work environment?

Technology is always advancing which means that I also need to be growing as an individual daily. Hence, I will try to keep up with the new trends and technologies that will be developed.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you, or do you know of anyone who has experienced this?

No, I don't.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on your verbal communication skills, your mentality, social skills or scholastic life?

Digital technology has positively impacted my verbal communication skills as I learnt new terminology that can be utilised verbally. Mentally, digital technology has challenged me to look at situations from a different perspective. It has also positively impacted my social skills and scholastic life as I was able to grasp many educational concepts using technology.

Q: Do you know what narcissism means?

Yes, this is a self-centred and egotistical person who only cares about themselves and are oblivious to the world.

Q: How important is it for you to be liked on online social media platforms?

This is not important to me.

Q: Do you feel any negative thoughts when you do not get a 'like' on social media after posting online?

No, I don't, as I don't need approval of how I look from other individuals. I believe that we all are beautiful inside and out.

Q: Do you feel the advancement of social media has affected you as an individual?

Yes, it has.

Q: How have you responded to this phenomenon of being digital savvy in the 21st century?

I have responded quite well to this concept as I have become adaptable and I able to embrace change. At first, it was challenging but eventually I found it to be useful.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal communication requires you to speak to another person to share information whereas non-verbal communication involves only the use of visual signals such as hand gestures or facial expressions.

Q: Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert, and why?

I am a bold introvert. I prefer spending time alone as I can recollect my thoughts and look back on how far I've come and how much I've grown. Furthermore, I am a quiet person and not one to talk much but I am not shy.

Q: There have been reports through the media of selfie deaths. Do you think this is a matter of concern or do you agree that having the perfect selfie posted online is necessary, no matter the consequences?

This is a matter of concern as people need to realise that they are perfect just the way they are, and the approval of others shouldn't matter. Life is too precious to be wasting it on taking a perfect selfie without thinking of the consequences. They should always bear in mind the consequences of their death on their loved ones.

Q: If you did not have access to digital technology, what would you do with your time?

I would spend more time with my family, read books and the Bible more often, go on outdoor adventures and get in shape.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Millennial 7

Male, 27-years old, obtained Master's in Mechanical Engineering in 2020, currently working as a Factory Engineering Manager (HOD Engineering) for a company in Pretoria. Going forward, his aim is to contribute sustainable Engineering knowledge in industries.

Q: How often do you use the Internet?

Almost daily, depending on the activity of the day.

Q: If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel? Explain.

Terrible, the entire life revolves around digital tech; searching for places to buy anything near you or the quality of service is done through digital tech.

Q: How many hours do you spend on social media platforms on an average per day?

Approximately 3 hours mostly, depending on the busyness of the day.

Q: Which social media platforms do you frequent and why?

LinkedIn and WhatsApp – I like the information on LinkedIn pertaining to business world, job opportunities etc. On WhatsApp it is more on communicating with friends and family and finding out what is happening in their lives.

Q: Do you prefer chatting on online social media platforms to having verbal communication with family or friends?

Yes, it is convenient; a response can always come when possible with social media. Verbal communication requires response at that time. And sometimes you may not be prepared to respond.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role in society? Explain.

Both negative and positive – To those who use it properly, it is a means of communication and interacting with other worlds. To younger generation mostly, it adds up on pressure as they view the nice life of people on social media. It tends to add unnecessary pressure about what life is about. Usually people only share the most beautiful pictures on social media like Instagram, and thus create the idea that life is all rosy all the time, this then becomes a negative impact to others.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has played a positive or negative role on your verbal communication skills?

Positive – I have improved my verbal communication through the digital tech. by learning fast the new words and thus using them in my communication when needed.

Q: If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel? Explain.

Already answered.

Q: Who are your favourite local and international celebrities that you follow (if any) and why?

Simon Sinek (international) – he is the relevant leadership speaker. He paints the picture of what leadership is about; I learn a lot from him.

Q: Do you enjoy taking 'selfies' and posting them online?

Not entirely, but sometimes I do.

Q: If yes, how often do you do this?

At least once or twice in a week.

Q: Do you enjoy posting comments or pictures more, or both equally, on online social media platforms?

Yes, usually motivating quotes, jokes and funny videos.

Q: Would you say you have more friends personally (physically) or on online social media platforms?

I have more friends personally; I have acquaintances of social media.

Q: How important is it for you to have friends online?

Not really important, but it's always good to communicate with them online especially when separated by a distance.

Q: Is there a selection criterion you follow before choosing a friend online?

Not really, for my online platforms, usually the people I choose are somehow my friends personally or they may contribute to some knowledge on LinkedIn.

Q: Do you prefer having more local or international friends, and why?

Both, local to interact with on relevant issues and ideas that affect you and international to learn a new way or method of doing something. Also they become my contact for international travelling.

Q: How do you balance your time on social media platforms with your education or job?

I only go to social media in the morning and afternoon when my job is done. There are no disturbances at all during the day, except I choose to communicate with people.

Q: What do you perceive as being the benefits of using online social media platforms?

Quick way to get info like: burning news etc.; fast travelling (interact with internationals on the go); vast information sharing.

Q: How do you see your future in the digital age after studying and entering the work environment?

To continue the way, it has been or improves even more, chances of using the digital platforms at work are increasing as opposed to having face-to-face meetings.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you, or do you know of anyone who has experienced this?

No, I do not know anyone who has had this. But I can imagine the challenges with eyesight if people stare at social media platforms the whole day.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on your verbal communication skills, your mentality, social skills or scholastic life?

I think positively, I am not obsessively on social media, so it has not affected me negatively at all. It really helps me that I am able to chat with friends even after a day of being busy.

Q: Do you know what narcissism means?

Yes, the idea that you are very important.

Q: How important is it for you to be liked on online social media platforms?

Not important, that is why no Facebook, Instagram or twitter account.

Q: Do you feel any negative thoughts when you do not get a 'like' on social media after posting online?

No, I only use WhatsApp and hardly post. If I do, only the people who have my number see my posts.

Q: Do you feel the advancement of social media has affected you as an individual?

No, I am in full control of my social media life.

Q: How have you responded to this phenomenon of being digital savvy in the 21ˢᵗ century?

I have ensured that in what is needed, I keep abreast. Basically the *__wants__* of social media such as Instagram, I have kept my distance from those.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal communication is when you speak with a person using your mouth; non-verbal is when you use written messaging or other means other than your mouth.

Q: Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert, and why?

A bit of both, in the midst of friends I am an extrovert, but in areas where I am not familiar with the group, I am an introvert.

Q: There have been reports through the media of selfie deaths. Do you think this is a matter of concern or do you agree that having the perfect selfie posted online is necessary, no matter the consequences?

It is a matter of concern. The idea that you risk your life over a perfect selfie is a true indication of being negatively affected by social media.

Q: If you did not have access to digital technology, what would you do with your time?

Read a book, play board games with friends, jog or cycle.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Millennial 8

Male, 27-years old, has his National Diploma in Information Technology, now on a contract employed as a Web Developer at a UoT; his aim is attaining employment in an environment where he can grow as a computer programmer and work towards becoming the expert that others rely on.

Q: What have been your most memorable experiences with social media?

Most of my mornings before checking Google News or an online newspaper site like Isolezwe or Daily Sun, I first look at the stories of my friends that I follow because that where most of my friends are sharing via Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp and that always keep me up to date with everything happening around.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role on society? Explain.

A positive role, because businesses are trending easier these days than before through social media, and it much easier to find a job now through seeing a post on the social media posts. With social networks we are able to communicate our thoughts and perceptions over different topics with a large number of audiences and raise our voice.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has played a positive or negative role on your verbal communication skills?

It plays a positive role and thanks to technology that there are no barriers because communication is now easy in case of situations when you want to convey something urgently to someone mobiles and emails come in handy.

Q: If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel? Explain.

That means my world will never be the same again and that means I will not be happy at all because we all living in the modern time and digital technology is the new way of living now and it makes a lot of things very and that makes our lives easier too.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Millennial 9

Female, 20-years old; completed her Bachelor of Technology in Public relations; she is working on her proposal for her Master's in Public Relations.

Q: What have been your most memorable experiences with social media?

Social media is one the platforms that allows you to put yourself out there. I once became a celeb on Instagram where I had to post a picture and she commented on it. Other thing is that I had to experience posting on the DUT pages since I am working at Corporate Affairs which is something I never expected and those are my memorable experiences.

Social media has played negative role in society because a lot of people live fake life because of it. People turn to do wrong things because of social media because everyone wants to look good in other people's eyes; so social media allows people to live fake lives.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has played a positive or negative role on your verbal communication skills?

Digital Technology has played a negative role on verbal communications skills because it shortens our communication in these days. There is not much of verbal communications now because everyone is on their phones doing personal things. People turn to run away from other things because they know that digital is technology. As much as it allows you to communicate easily but verbal allows to get to see the person you are talking to and get to see their intentions.

Q: If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel? Explain.

Things wouldn't be good because digital technology helps you do things easily with a short period of time while if it was not there some things would have taken long to reach them or do.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Millennial 10

Male, 21-years old, has his Bachelor of Technology in Public Relations; he aims to do his Masters in Public Relations.

Q: What role do social media play in society?

Social media is good and bad to the society because we often use it as a medium of communication and it one of the cheapest and easiest tools one can use to communicate, the message is delivered very quickly and you are able to get feedback as soon as possible, you are able to get updated of what is happening around the world. If there is a message you are trying you send most people will be able to access it and you also have direct communication with people. If you are facing a challenge and there is a person who has a similar problem as yours, you can post it and find different solutions about what you are going through.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has played a positive or negative role on your verbal communication skills?

Disadvantages of social media is that most people are now the victims of cyberbullying as there are people who create fake accounts just to destroy other people's characters (Defamation of character) by posting their nudes and creating false accusations about them. There is a high rate of cheating because of social media. Most people are being scammed through social media as they are being promised that if they join a certain thing they will gain more money. Suicide is very high because most people are under pressure by what other people are posting they feel as if they are failing themselves as they live a life that is below than the others. The youth is dating older people just because they want to improve their standard of living and post pictures that are appealing to their social media friends.

Bad because most people often use vulgar language when they are communicating and sometimes I find myself using the same language they are using which is not good. It has also improved my verbal communication skills because there are people who post things that are educational and this enhances my knowledge.

Q: If you did not have a means to access digital technology, how would that make you feel? Explain.

It would have been boring because there is so much that I am gaining from digital technology, like entertainment, I am always updated of what is happening around us and it has also improved the way of thinking as a person.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Millennial 11

Female, 30-years old, working on her Public Relations Master's proposal for 2021.

Q: As a social influencer how often do you post?

In my work capacity, I post to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram on a regular basis, mostly a daily basis (Mon-Friday). In a personal capacity, I do not post on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram; if I do, it is usually posts that I share as public with that I find useful or informative.

I share a lot of useful information that I come across on social media platforms mostly Facebook, with my WhatsApp contacts, many of whom are of the older generation and do use these social media apps.

Q: How many social media platforms are you on, kindly name them?

On a personal basis I am on the following social media platforms:

1. Facebook
2. Twitter
3. Instagram
4. WhatsApp
5. LinkedIn
6. You Tube

I use Snapchat and Pinterest on an infrequent basis.

Q: On average how many followers do you have on the various social media platforms?

1. Facebook – 411 friends
2. Twitter – 90 followers (340 following)
3. Instagram – 168 followers (469 following)
4. WhatsApp – 256 contacts
5. LinkedIn – 352 connections
6. You Tube – following 49 accounts

Q: Has the advancement of social media affected you as a person?

Yes, it has changed the way I do a lot of things, especially how I access information and communicate with people. Social media has made it easier to keep in contact with connections, especially those that are not in the same geographical location as I am in.

Q: How have you responded to the 'pressure' of having to be digital savvy?

I think that I have responded well to the pressure, I am very quick at learning and extremely hands-on when it comes to learning about new technology and technological developments. The practical experience I have with social media makes it easier for me to learn and to also teach others.

Q: How many hours do you spend in a day on online social media platforms?

I spend a lot of time online, maybe about 6-8 hours a day online on the different social media platforms both in a work or personal capacity.

Q: Which are the online social media platforms you frequent and explain why?

Facebook, I find it more user-friendly and insightful, I also find that access to useful and relevant information on Facebook is much simpler and easier to obtain than Twitter or Instagram which is more image based and less content apps.

I also use WhatsApp frequently as it's an easier and cheaper messaging platform to communicate with both personal contacts as well as work contacts. The video call and the WhatsApp call feature is also something I use often, especially during the Covid-19 Pandemic to regularly speak to close family and friends.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal communication is when you use your voice/words to communicate; I believe that it is when you are actually speaking or directly talking to the person whether it is on the phone, face-to-face or via video call. I assume that sending voice notes is also a form of verbal communication.

Non-verbal communication is when you use alternative methods than using your voice/words to communicate, such as writing to them, hand/sign language, messaging services, I believe it is any manner used to communicate that does not include words.

Q: Do you enjoy chatting online rather than having verbal communication with family and friends at times?

Yes, I prefer chatting online than verbal communication as I feel it's easier and more convenient.

Q: How does it make you feel when you online?

It has become a part of daily routine now, I guess I feel excited and both curious as each log in to a social media site means that I am made aware of new developments and updates both by family and friends and relevant organisations and influencers.

Q: When are you offline?

When I sleep I am offline, which is just for a few hours a night.

Q: If you had no social media for a day, how will it make you feel?

I would feel neutral about it, I have gone a day previously on many occasions and I was not deeply affected by not being on social media.

Q: Do you feel any negative thoughts when you do not get a 'like' on social media after posting something online?

No I don't, I understand that it's at the discretion of social media friends and followers as to whether they agree with what I posted in order to like the post

Q: How do you react to trolls online (if any)?

I have fortunately not experienced this, however if I did in the encounter a troll/s in the near future I would ignore and move on, as troll/s purpose is wreak havoc and create tension and a negative image of the poster and responding to trolls/s would in essence 'give them what they want".

Q: How do you balance your time on social media platforms with your personal and professional life?

To be honest, it's quiet hard to balance social media time and personal time, as in the new era, 'our phones are stuck to our hands'.

I do try to leave my phone aside if I'm watching a movie/series and having a one-one conversation with someone or being a part of a group gathering, as well going out to restaurants/eating out.

Q: How do you see your future in the digital age as an artist in South Africa?

I don't think this question is relevant to me.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on your verbal communication skills, your mentality, social environment or scholastic situation?

It has had both a negative and positive impact: Negative – Digital technology has removed the need for close connections/communication with people, as now you don't need to have one-one-meetings with people you can just do everything online. Verbally there is no need to communicate as everything can be done online without any verbal communication.

Also there is no need to worry about typing correctly words etc. as there is a spell checker and corrector in most apps and devices.

It has also meant that socially it made me a bit more distant as one can easily especially their current situation by going online which is rude in instances of face-to-face meetings, gatherings.

Positive – Digital technology has made it easier to communicate and share with people across the globe, families in different provinces and overseas, colleagues based at different locations.

On a scholarly level, digital communication has made it easier to access relevant information, sources and resources as opposed to the era before digital communication.

Q: Do you enjoy posting comments or pictures more? If yes, how often do you do this?

Yes, if I come across something that I feel is positive and the posters deserves to know I will post a comment or add a reaction/like to their post /picture.

Q: Would you say you have more friends or fans online?

I have more friends; I make it a habit to ensure that especially on Facebook, I only accept friend requests from people I personally know as I feel it is more personal than other platforms.

Q: How important is it to have followers online?

It depends one one's social status, an influencer/media/TV/ personality /musician etc., it is very important for them to have a good number of followers, as this also impacts financially for them.

Q: Is there a selection criterion you follow before choosing a follower online?

Yes – They must be someone I can relate to, be relevant and important in their industry/field.

Q: Do you prefer having more local or international fans and why?

I prefer to have an even mix of both: locally because I also believe in supporting local talent and its closer to home; international because of their influence and role globally

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you and do you know of anyone who has been affected?

No, it has not so far.

I have heard of people/events where people's online presence has impacted negatively both in personal lives and professionally, some cases where they even faced disciplinary action for "being online during work hours or posting during work hours".

Q: Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert, and why?

I am both (an Omnivert). I am extremely introverted around certain individuals especially when it comes to family act, as I feel I don't want to share too much personal information with them on the other hand I am an extrovert around certain friends, families and colleagues, as I feel I can relate with and to them and choose to openly share information/experiences with them.

Q: Do you enjoy taking selfies and posting online social media platforms?

No – if and when I take selfies they are just for my personal use; I will rarely post a selfie online.

Q: If yes, how often do you do this? I will rarely post a selfie online. If so it would probably be a few times in a year for special occasions.

Q: There have been reports through the media of selfie deaths, do you think this is a matter of concern or do you agree having the perfect selfie is necessary, no matter the consequences?

Yes, this is a matter of concern, people are risking their lives, health and well-being for the perfect image, and this could mean that there are more underlying concerns/issues that could cause such as mental health issues. It also shows the mentality of those people and their poor concern for their lives.

Q: If you did not have access to digital technology, what would you do with your time?

Probably reading, watching movies, listening to music, exploring the outdoors, cooking and baking

Q: What do you perceive as being the benefits of using social media platforms, especially in your profession?

- Cheap and cost effective way to communicate
- Easy way to communicate with students/general public
- Easy access to information
- Easy way to gather stats on campaigns/posts, etc.
- Provides a platform to get ahead of problems, such as student protest.

Q: Do you know what narcissism means?

It is when someone's behaviour towards themselves gives a perception that they are in love with themselves and they have huge egos to go with their behaviour.

Q: Do you feel local celebrities have a direct or indirect impact on their followers? How so?

Yes, they have a direct impact; they become role models and trend setters to their followers, their actions and behaviour patterns also copied by their followers.

Q: If social media did not exist, would you be able to survive as an artist? Not relevant.

Q: At any point, did you feel the usage of social media had a negative impact on your health and well-being? If so, please elaborate?

Yes- during the Covid-19 pandemic, social media has been flooded with so much information and news, all different articles/opinions it was hard to decipher what was relevant and what was not also the flood of information especially about deaths was alarming and concerning.

Q: Is social media a blessing or a curse in terms of being an influencer and being constantly reported on or discussed on social media sites?

I would assume that is both for an influencer, an influencer can be an influencer because of their status and following on social media, not all followers are fans, some are critics and trolls waiting to strike others offer positive and insightful feedback so it would definitely be both.

Q: If you had the opportunity would you consider having more followers than you already have, or are you satisfied that you have enough followers? Explain?

I am happy with the following I have. I keep who is important and relevant and have no intention of expanding on this. If my social status changed in the future, then I am sure my goals towards being an influencer would

change. Also the bigger base of followers, the more time one would have to dedicate towards communicating with them, unless hiring someone to do so would be beneficial.

Q: What have been your most memorable experiences with social media?

Checking into locations I have visited over the years, as well as special celebrations especially with family and friends on Facebook and then having memories to look back on, especially during this pandemic.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role in society? Explain.

Positive – its brought people together that were out of geographical location, made it easier for them to communicate, made access to information easier, made sharing of special events/memories/information easier. It is also a cost effective way to communicate.

Q: Do you think the usage of social media has a positive or negative impact on your health and well-being? Explain.

I think it's been positive – I communicate with people more than I would on a daily basis, I share information and special moments with those close to me. I am able to find what's happening around me both locally, nationally and globally with little effort. I find useful information to assist with my health and wellbeing on social media that I would not easily access anywhere.

Q: During Covid-19, has social media following dwindled or increased, please elaborate the impact it has had on you?

I would say it has increased, more and more people were looking to social media for information and updates regarding the pandemics status.

My usage on social media has also increased; it impacted me in a positive manner as it provided a platform to easily accessed information.

Q: Also, just add whatever other thoughts you have on the matter, pretty please....

The questions were quiet insightful and challenging.

My opinion: The matter of social media and its effectiveness will be brought to light during this pandemic, social media its usage for businesses and organisations will also heavily increase during and after this period, it will slowly replace the traditional print media in South Africa faster than expected with the Covid-19 pandemic helping this process along.

The role of influencers as a result will expand.

ENDS

APPENDIX I: TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS OF MILLENNIALS

INTERVIEWEE Parent 1

Female, 48-years old, unemployed mom to 24-year-old male; she currently lives with her son in KZN who works as a freelance driver for Uber Eats.

Q: Has the advancement of social media affected you as a parent of a digital millennial?

No

Q: How have you responded to this phenomenon of being digital savvy, especially amongst the KZN millennials, in the 21st century?

I have not engaged and joined all social media platforms except Facebook. My digital knowledge is limited to what I need for basic communication. My son is also not interested in social media, is not influenced by IG etc. He does however watch documentaries posted on you tube.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal communication refers to what is articulated orally... talking, singing, screaming, shouting, etc. Non-verbal will be anything else that conveys an emotion through action.

Q: Are you also a frequent user of online social media platforms? If yes, which ones and elaborate why?

I am on Facebook, especially during lock down. It's good to keep in touch with friends and also to see what's going on with the people I know, and how people feel about current issues. I also use what's app for its convenience in communicating.

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenge in being a parent of a digital millennial?

My challenge as a parent never involved anything related to technology.

Q: Do you monitor your son's social media usage? No

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you or persons close to you?

Most definitely yes! Having an opinion and then sharing it always has repercussions. What's app has been stressful with the pressure to respond, as a result I have turned off my notifications and only look at my phone randomly.

Q: How much verbal communication exists in your home, i.e. do you and your family communicate over the supper table or is this non-existent practice in your home? (Please elaborate).

Verbal communication is minimal; we do converse at the table. I try to avoid communication to avoid stressful situations.

Q: How often do you access news online for your own needs or professional purposes?

I read the news online just about every day.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role on digital millennials? Explain.

Both, I think the structure and foundation set impacts the development of the child.

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The environment also influences the character of the child. Social media has had a positive impact on those who were raised to respect and value, not only themselves but all those around them. Those negatively affected by social media had pre-existing factors that contributed to their 'destruction'. In this case social media has accelerated or compounded their problems.

Q: How do you perceive your role as a parent of a digital millennial? Explain.

My son is not a digital millennial in that he is not active on social media platforms to an extent that it would be worrisome for me. He is more into sports which is a relief.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Parent 2

Male, father to 19-year-old male; works as a SARS consultant in Durban.

Q: Has the advancement of social media affected you as a parent of a digital millennial?

Yes, definitely it has.

Q: How have you responded to this phenomenon of being digital savvy, especially amongst the KZN millennials, in the 21st century?

Not very strongly or fast enough; The reason being that the social media Environment is so dynamic and ever changing, it is hard to keep up with the launches of new Apps, blogs, websites, etc.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal is actual face-to-face communication – in person contact, whilst non-verbal is communication through a letter / email; various forms of social media – impersonal.

Q: Are you also a frequent user of online social media platforms? If yes, which ones and elaborate why?

Yes, email and WhatsApp. Email is used majority in the work environment and is an essential tool of the work place.

Whilst, WhatsApp is an available cost effective 'cheap' and 'quick' tool of communication as compared to physically being there or calling someone telephonically. Not on any other platforms.

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenge in being a parent of a digital millennial?

Keeping up with the trends of the social media environment; unable to keep abreast of the new or different apps or websites that become available.

From a security point of view, not knowing the apps, blogs, websites they are viewing, the people they are meeting online and conversely the people that are trying to befriend them via online media.

Q: Do you monitor your son's social media usage?

Not really. The reason being, I am not so tech savvy and time is sometimes an issue. However, I am aware of some of the apps they are on. Their social media content and usage is monitored by some of my immediate family. I am informed of any unusual interactions or content not appropriate.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you or persons close to you?

Yes. It does. For the right reasons, it can be a useful tool and conversely it could be negatively used to harm you.

Q: How much verbal communication exists in your home, i.e. do you and your family communicate over the supper table or is this non-existent practice in your home? (Please elaborate).

A substantial amount of communication exists (wife never is quiet) generally and during supper. Try to control the use of electronic devices in the home. Knowing this is a worldwide growing trend of non - communication within a household, try to be out going or interactive by doing activities or going places where devices are not essential.

Q: How often do you access news online for your own needs or professional purposes?

Almost every day – During work days, very regularly during the course of the day; less access practiced on the weekends.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role on digital millennials? Explain.

Both: Positive: They are more aware of factual information due to the speed of which it can be accessed. The speed at which social media can communicate an event and the target audience it needs to reach is commendable.

Negative: The ease and low cost of communication has made it very easy for communication. This results in reduced face-to-face and personal interaction. The physical social interaction is being lost. Prolonged use of devices leads to mental fatigue and causes damage to the eyesight. Their physical development milestones are delayed in their growth trajectory - the reason being they spend less time outside playing while indirectly developing their muscles. Also, a negative act can, once placed on social media cause defamation to an individual because of the speed at which social media can distribute the message. This can cause low self-esteem and a negative impact on the individual.

Q: How do you perceive your role as a parent of a digital millennial? Explain.

Try to be vigilant of the social media trends. Watch the news or newspapers for current social media issues. Speak with friends, colleagues, etc. to be aware of what is occurring in the social media environment. Monitor their usage directly or indirectly. Put in boundaries and advise them of the consequences on not keeping to the required. Act on non-conformance by withdrawing the devices; constantly speaking of the uses of social media – both the positive and negative impacts of it.

<u>**INTERVIEWEE Parent 3**</u>

Female, 46-year-old locum teacher, mom to 23-year-old male who is a Law graduate and 20-year-old female who is studying to become a physiotherapist.

Q: Has the advancement of social media affected you as a parent of a digital millennial?

Yes, children have more access to information, and socially it has changed how children interact; it also consumes children's time and there is not much control as to what content children can view.

Q: How have you responded to this phenomenon of being digital savvy, especially amongst the KZN millennials, in the 21st century?

No, I was not exposed to digital devices, so I am not indulgent and consumed by the digital savvy phenomenon.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal communication is having face-to-face interactions, dialogues, conversations directly with another individual.

Non-verbal communication is communicating via social media, texting, SMS, no face-to-face interactions.

Q: Are you also a frequent user of online social media platforms? If yes, which ones and elaborate why?

Yes, Facebook because there is a lot of information available, a lot of current issues in the world are discussed, there are a lot of groups to join like women's' groups.

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenge in being a parent of a digital millennial?

Children do not communicate with adults, there is no control; days of communication face-to-face are over.

Q: Do you monitor your daughter or son's social media usage?

No, as a parent I trust my children.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you or persons close to you?

Yes, being on social media can leave you tired, it makes you forgetful, its time consuming that you even forget to eat; you are isolating yourself by being on social media. It can also have an impact on one's mental health.

Q: How do you see your future as a parent in the digital age?

Parents need to learn more about the advancements in technology, so they can understand it. Parents should also do short courses on technology to stay updated.

Q: Do you think that digital technology has impacted positively or negatively on you or any persons close to you, including verbal communication skills, mentality, social environment or scholastically?

Yes, for younger children, it impacts negatively as they spend too much time playing games like on PlayStation, there is no time boundary, they lose interest in school work and can exhibit anger if they are asked to stop playing, there can also be incidents of cyberbullying on online gaming platforms, which can affect a child's mental health. The positive impact of social media is the information you have access to, information that you use for learning which can advance your cognitive ability.

Q: How much verbal communication exists in your home, i.e. do you and your family communicate over the supper table or is this non-existent practice in your home? (Please elaborate).

We frequently verbally communicate, and we do try to have a meal together, or just spend time together, to talk about issues. We also pray together.

Q: How often do you access news online for your own needs or professional purposes?

Every day I access news, I use News24 which is online, instead of using newspapers.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal?

Verbal is speaking interacting with people, non-verbal is not speaking; it is a non-vocal communication.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role on digital millennials? Explain.

Social media has played a positive role on digital millennial, it keeps us technology advanced, keeps us ahead of matters.

Q: How do you perceive your role as a parent of a digital millennial? Explain.

As a parent it can be stressful because as mentioned, too much time gets spent by children on social media, thus there is a lack of communication between children and parents. Children also see how much time parents spend on social media so they are just as guilty, which can make reprimanding children difficult. As a parent I feel I should cut down on my social media usage to communicate with my child better, and as a parent we should be teaching that social media should not take over their lives.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Parent 4

Female, Union Administrator at a University of Technology, mom to 22-year-old who is working on her proposal to study towards her Master's in Business Law.

Q: Has the advancement of social media affected you as a parent of a digital millennial?

Yes, it has. My kids no longer socialise with us. They are most of their time on their phones. My kids not receiving the love and affection that they need to feel from us. Most of the time we are staring at television and phone screens over meals rather than talking to one another.

Q: How have you responded to this phenomenon of being digital savvy, especially amongst the KZN millennials, in the 21st century?

The world is changing and the fact that my kids are being digital savvy is important as most of the things are done electronically. I support my kids being digital savvy and abreast with the increasingly advanced technology. It kinds of allows them to be part of the current society.

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal communication involves the use of words or speech or language to express emotions or thoughts or exchange information.

Non-verbal communication involves the use of visual or non-verbal signs such as facial expressions, eye or body movements, gestures, and many more without speaking.

Q: Are you also a frequent user of online social media platforms? If yes, which ones and elaborate why?

Yes, I am – Facebook and WhatsApp.

Facebook – allows me to keep in touch with stuff happening with my friends and family, e.g., their birthdays.

WhatsApp – is an easier faster way to communicate; cheaper as well.

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenge in being a parent of a digital millennial?

The biggest challenge I face all the time with my kids is the fact that they have become very lazy, they rebel easily and if I happen to say anything they first need to go to Google to see if I am correct. Everything is GOOGLE!!!

Q: Do you monitor your daughter or son's social media usage?

My kids are adults and I do not monitor their social media usage.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you or persons close to you?

Sometimes.

Q: How much verbal communication exists in your home, i.e. do you and your family communicate over the supper table or is this non-existent practice in your home? (Please elaborate).

There is very little communication.

Q: How often do you access news online for your own needs or professional purposes?

Almost 80% of the time; it is easy to access information.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role on digital millennials? Explain.

It has its advantages and disadvantages in that my kids never use to read the newspapers but because it is accessible online they read the news and is kept abreast.

It has also given them a broad knowledge of information.

Q: How do you perceive your role as a parent of a digital millennial? Explain

I am a very broad minded person. As a parent I see myself as a 'confirmation tool' to my kids. After they Google stuff I am there to confirm if Google is telling them the truth.

ENDS

INTERVIEWEE Parent 5

Female, works as a Client Liaison at Digital Printing Company in Durban. She has a 19-year-old and 21-year-old daughter, both studying in KZN.

Q: Has the advancement of social media affected you as a parent of a digital millennial?

Me, personally, no – I think that this is due to my children being raised by the grandparents as we were working parents and only having access to mobile phones when they were teenagers. They played games together indoor and outdoor and basically spent a lot of time with them (keeping them occupied).

Q: How have you responded to this phenomenon of being digital savvy, especially amongst the KZN millennials, in the 21st century?

I just keep my cool and trust that I have brought my children up in the correct way – with values and morals

Q: What is your understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal is talking to one another (face-to-face or over the telephone). Non-verbal is text and emailing.

Q: Are you also a frequent user of online social media platforms? If yes, which ones and elaborate why?
No

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenge in being a parent of a digital millennial?

Getting the children off their phones; they don't obey parents anymore. They think they know it all.

Q: Do you monitor your daughter's social media usage? No.

Q: Do you think being online has any social or medical repercussions for you or persons close to you?

Yes, it has. People seem to feel worthless and more depressed. I hardly look at people's status as I don't have time and not interested in what they doing or where they are (that their own thing) and good for them if live is good. Life is complicated enough these days.

Q: How much verbal communication exists in your home, i.e. do you and your family communicate over the supper table or is this non-existent practice in your home? (Please elaborate).

We always have supper on the table and together. No phones are allowed. It is our time for discussion and finding out how each one's days went and if anyone needs any help.

Q: How often do you access news online for your own needs or professional purposes?

 I access it every day.

Q: Do you think that social media has played a positive or negative role on digital millennials? Explain.

I think both Positive and Negative.

Positive – Information is readily available for research and their studies.

Negative – It is a distraction while you are studying and it makes people vane.

Q: How do you perceive your role as a parent of a digital millennial? Explain

I have to make sure that I continue to teach right from wrong. I instil values and morals and the children need to know that we as parents are the provider in our home and need to be respected.

ENDS