There is no doubt that our next generation is consumed with rising social networking popularity. In fact, 90% of today's adolescents use social networking platforms. While it is argued that mental health concerns may or may not be victim to these rising technologies, little is known about how these platforms are influencing adolescents' views of society and themselves that is facilitated by a misguided perception of reality. Therefore, today I will be explaining the framework and findings of my research on perfectionism and how this influences adolescents.

Perfectionism is defined as a characteristic describing those who strive for flawlessness, set excessively high standards, and have tendencies to be overly critical of their behavior. However, perfectionism is much more than a surface level determination for precision. It is an overarching cognitive ideology with more complex multi-dimensional characteristics. These include self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism.

Socially prescribed perfectionists differ from self-oriented in that they believe others have strong expectations which are practically unattainable. Believing acceptance is measured by fulfilling these expectations, they strive maladaptively. Self-oriented beliefs comprise a self-imposed strive for perfection, striving adaptively.

Another point of discussion, self-efficacy, refers to one's belief in their personal capabilities. This study encompassed the cognitive attitudes of adolescents in regard to both self-efficacy and perfectionism, addressing the problem that social networking may be an instigator for maladaptive or negatively associated degrees of these two attributes.

This was tested by the question, to what extent do social networking platforms affect levels of self-efficacy and the presence of self-oriented or socially prescribed perfectionism in secondary students aged 15 to 19 years? But why is this an issue? Theoretically, there are real world implications for someone who exhibits more maladaptive or socially prescribed variations of perfectionism. On the basis that maladaptive perfectionists fear others' evaluation and are motivated by a fear of failure rather than a need for achievement, it can be concluded that they face the threat of their perfectionism increasing exponentially over time.

Society will subsequently face the repercussions of a perfectionistic world where standards are too unrealistic. Hence, why this study researched whether social networking platforms have any effect on contributing to these obstructive characteristics in order to limit their presence. As many academics in the psychology field have discovered, including psychiatry professor, Jeremy Tyler, in 2019, not only is the next generation consumed with social networking popularity, but these platforms are stresses for the presence of perfectionism in young people.

In Australia alone, almost 80% of the population in 2021 were active social networking users compared to 58% in 2015. From an adolescent's perspective, they are fixated on social comparison and what they see online, which portrays a misleading representation of reality. The link between online platforms and perfectionism is guided by Professors Sherry and Smith who conducted the largest study on perfectionism in 2019. It was discovered that there had been an increase in perfectionism among adolescents that was due to sociocultural influences, like unrealistic media images.

These findings were strongly supported utilizing evidence from the reliable, most commonly studied dimensions of perfectionism and, most widely used measure, the Multi-dimensional Perfectionism Scale by Hewitt and Flett. Clearly, current literature does state that perfectionism has increased but fails to address how each facet of perfectionism is alternatively affected by social networking. They do suggest that socially prescribed perfectionists use networking more problematically. Thus, the reason this research sought to uncover how each facet was alternatively affected.

Overall, if it is accepted that maladaptive perfectionism is a growing issue and if it is accepted that posts on social networking showcase unrealistically perfect lives, then it can be hypothesized that one who uses social networking for longer than four hours daily will report higher scores of socially prescribed perfectionism because of their fear of negative peer evaluation that is mitigated online.

Furthermore, this study challenged the debate about self-efficacy and perfectionism. To determine the relationship, Hart and his team in 1998 administered multiple perfectionism scales to college students. Their findings determined that socially prescribed perfectionists report high self-efficacy while self-oriented perfectionists are associated with low self-efficacy. However, the preconceived notions of socially prescribed perfectionists leads this study to disagree.

A more recent account from professors in psychology and behavioral science in 2013 supports this judgment. Consequently, this research challenged this literature debate and further hypothesized that those with socially prescribed tendencies will have reported lower self-efficacy.

A sample size of 415 senior school students was sought from various schools. Testing participants' perfectionism levels against self-efficacy and daily networking usage scores provided clear evidence to establish the relationship between these phenomena. A survey facilitated the data collection comprising three main components, with two derived from preexisting and validated questionnaires. This included the Child Adolescents Perfectionism Scale Short Form, and the New General Self-Efficacy Scale, which were both 5-point Likert scales.

In terms of considerations, a potential bias was survey question auto bias. Addressing this, questions were randomly distributed throughout, which was inspected by individuals unrelated to the study. All respondents were repeatedly informed of the anonymity of the survey, and this also covered ethical considerations of which participants could withdraw at any time and the scales were not used to assess participants on an individual level. In terms of potential hidden variables, as participants came from various schools which have different phone ban guidelines, some respondents may have had more regular platform access.

However, this variable did not skew the data as even if someone did have prolonged access, they should report higher socially prescribed perfectionism.

Now, to the results. To begin, an overwhelming 95.8% of respondents actually used social networking platforms. After data analysis, using the Pearson's correlation coefficient, there was a weak negative linear relationship of negative 0.32 between social networking use and self-oriented perfectionism.

This was expected and suggests that self-oriented perfectionist are relatively uninfluenced by social networking. Considering social networking has increased, and with the understanding that self oriented strive adaptively and socially prescribed strive maladaptively, this corresponds with Sharon Smith's findings who proposed that perfectionism has become more maladaptive.

Alternatively, there was a strong, positive linear relationship of 0.86 between socially prescribed perfectionism and social networking use. This firmly supports what was anticipated by the hypothesis based on the literature and demonstrates that with prolonged networking usage, respondents will score higher on maladaptive perfectionism forms.

This is important because if increased social networking influences socially prescribed perfectionist, this implies that society's standards may be inaccessible. And both of these correlations can be seen on the line graph. Furthermore, this study expanded on previous research, challenging the discrepancy between perfectionism and self-efficacy.

Unlike the research of Hart, no relationship was found. Subsequently, this evidence implies that both groups are striving for perfection regardless of their motives and this alone does not directly correlate with self-efficacy. Alternatively, while it could not be proven how each perfectionism facet was influenced, time spent on social networking platforms did start a positive correlation to lower self-efficacy. Despite these results, there are some limitations that impeded the ability to attribute possible causes to certain platforms.

Participants were asked which platforms they used but not usage duration, so this lack of platform specific questions was a survey design limitation. It is possible that one platform may be causing maladaptive perfectionism over others, and therefore future studies should add this dimension to substantiate the implications. Additionally, a greater emphasis should be placed in self-efficacy and perfectionism as this study could not answer this debate.

Ultimately, it is now known from this research that social networking platforms may be contributing to a rise in maladaptive perfectionism as statistically significant correlations in the hypothesized direction were found. Evidence from the present study does suggest a correlation between social networking, imposing maladaptive perfectionism on impressionable adolescents. Thus, it is not just the possibility of mental health concerns that is victim of social networking. Rather, it is the effect that it has on how adolescents view society and themselves which this research uncovered. Thank you.