

**Adapting to a COVID World: A Comparative Study of Participants' Experiences of Online
vs. Face-to-Face Facilitation**

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof, that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third-party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

April 2022

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Abstract

This thesis explored the differences and similarities between feedback from those who experienced a synchronous online workshop vs those who experienced the same workshop in a face-to-face delivery method. The workshop that I got the feedback sheets from was a cognitive behavioural workshop delivered to adults in a corporate environment in South Africa. It was a 4-day workshop, which looked at shifting unhelpful behaviour in both the work and home environment. My research attempted to aid in the understanding and to further explore both differences and similarities in terms of the feedback and whether there were any differences and similarities in terms of the experience of either format. This may assist decision-makers to make more informed choices as to whether to continue developing employees or to cancel training altogether if online learning is the only option. Should there be only limited academic research to base decisions on, there is a risk that corporates will choose to either abandon training or follow their own lead and agendas when it comes to financing training for their employees. This is a potentially significant risk that could be mitigated with enough formal research regarding face-to-face versus online learning. My hope is that my thesis will add to the body of formal research on this topic and also provide more relevance in terms of the South African context. This research may also be relied upon since almost a third of the country is vaccinated and businesses are considering new hybrid ways of working and whether or not to reopen face-to-face training or to consider a synchronous training as the new normal. This thesis employed a thematic analysis in order to generate themes through the data. Through the data analysis there were five themes that emerged, namely: “The Link Between Perceived Value and Impact”, “The Effect of an Informal Light-Hearted Learning Environment”, “Engagement Always Wins”, “Gratefulness for Personal Growth” and “Experienced Irritations”.

In response to the key research question, *What are the differences and similarities between adult learners' experiences of the cognitive-behavioural training workshop when performed virtually versus face-to-face*, I picked up on some clear similarities as well as some unique differences. The differences were that the feedback sheets received from the face-to-face workshops had no comments about connectivity issues. "Experienced Irritations" comments from those in the face-to-face workshop revolved more around the course participants themselves feeling drained or tired at the end of the workshop. An additional difference in the feedback from the participants in the different formats was found under the theme "The Effect of an Informal Learning Environment". There were also differences under the theme "Creating Safe Spaces". For the rest of the themes and subthemes, both formats seemed remarkably similar in their feedback and the participants overall experiences.

Opsomming

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die verskille tussen terugvoer van diegene wat 'n sinchrone aanlyn werkswinkel beleef het, teen diegene wat dieselfde werkswinkel ondergaan het in 'n aangesig-tot-aangesig afleweringmetode. Die werkswinkel waaruit ek die terugvoer blaai gekry was, was 'n kognitiewe gedragswerkswinkel wat aan volwassenes in 'n korporatiewe omgewing in Suid - Afrika gelewer is. Dit was 'n vierdaagse werkswinkel waarin gekyk is na die verskuiwing van onbehelpsame gedrag in die werk- en huisomgewing. My navorsing het gepoog om die begrip te vergemaklik en om ooreenkomste en verskille in terme van die terugvoer te ondersoek en of daar verskille is in die ervaring tussen die twee formate. Dit kan besluitnemers help om meer ingeligte keuses te maak of hulle wil voortgaan om werknemers te ontwikkel of om opleiding heeltemal te kanselleer as aanlyn leer die enigste opsie is. As daar slegs beperkte akademiese navorsing is om besluite te baseer, bestaan die risiko dat ondernemings besluit om opleiding te laat vaar of hul eie leiding en agendas te volg ten opsigte van die finansiering van opleiding vir hul werknemers. Dit is 'n potensieel beduidende risiko wat met genoeg formele navorsing oor aangesig tot aangesig teenoor aanlynleer verminder kan word. My hoop is dat my proefskrif bydra tot die formele navorsing oor hierdie onderwerp en dat dit ook meer relevant sal wees in terme van die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Hierdie tesis het 'n tematiese analise gebruik om temas deur die data te genereer. Deur die data-analise het vyf temas na vore gekom, naamlik: "Die verband tussen waargenome waarde en impak", "Die effek van 'n informele lighartige leeromgewing", "Betrokkenheid wen altyd", "Dankbaarheid vir persoonlike groei" en " Ervare irritasies ”.

In reaksie op die belangrikste navorsingsvraag: Wat is die verskille tussen volwasse leerders se ervarings van die kognitiewe gedragsopleidingswerkswinkel wanneer dit aanlyn teenoor aangesig tot aangesig uitgevoer word, het ek 'n paar duidelike ooreenkomste sowel as enkele unieke verskille opgemerk. In reaksie op die navorsingsvraag, was die verskille dat die terugvoer blaai wat van die aangesig-tot-aangesig-werkswinkels ontvang is, geen opmerkings oor verbindings probleme gehad het nie. Opmerkings van "Ervare irritasies" van diegene wat in die werkswinkel van aangesig tot aangesig was, het meer gedraai na die kursusgangers wie self uitgeput of moeg gevoel het aan die einde van die werkswinkel. 'n Bykomende verskil in die terugvoer van die deelnemers in die aanlyn formaat is gevind onder die tema "Die effek van 'n informele leeromgewing". Daar was ook verskille onder die tema "Veilige ruimtes skep". Vir die res van die temas en subtemas het beide formate opmerklik dieselfde gelyk in hul terugvoer en die deelnemers se algehele ervarings.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

With the onset of the Coronavirus, my company, *Psychology at Work*, whose predominant income was normally garnered through face-to-face workshops, was faced with an entire year of training suddenly being wiped off the calendar. Although we initially hoped that the first three weeks of lockdown would be all, my clients typically cancelled everything until further notice. In an attempt to continue procuring income, given training venues were closed for business, flights not really possible and client companies unwilling to host training, I joined the massive migration to synchronous online learning platforms. While adapting my workshop to be more suitable to an online format I did some research as to what makes online workshops/learning successful. I was faced with a body of research whose definitions about online workshops initially included anything computer-based and any facilitation that included non-face-to-face methodologies and tools. There seemed to be a distinct difference between online learning that means using a synchronous virtual platform, and previous, and somewhat possibly outdated, research referring to digital/computer-based learning prior to the emergence of synchronous online learning platforms. Given the sudden, forced uptake of these online learning platforms, most hesitations or previous complaints about computer-based learning seemed to fall by the wayside. Earning an income remotely seemed far more important than these previous concerns about online learning possibly not being as engaging as face-to-face learning. In the midst of this I facilitated the same Interpersonal Intelligence workshop in its new format and received feedback from participants after each workshop. With

these unusual circumstances and the data already received, combined with the gap in the body of knowledge, specifically on synchronous online learning experiences, I endeavoured to compare the feedback from those now forced to do the online synchronous version of the workshop to those who had completed the original face-to-face version of the workshop. Given that we are at this moment still dealing with waves of Coronavirus, and some corporates are still predominantly working remotely, I believed it was very important to delve into the unique set of circumstances and unique context that working remotely in South Africa presents.

1.2 Context of the study

South Africa is an economically disparate country. When South Africa moved from apartheid to being a democracy, we held our first free and inclusive elections with the African National Congress moving into position to lead the country (Soudien, 2007). At this point the elections brought about political freedom and the ability to change some of the laws and policies which had previously discriminated against people of colour. However, although South Africa now has one of the most liberal and modern constitutions globally, the country still suffers from vast inequality and poverty, often still entrenched along racial lines (Khumalo, 2013).

Given the unmet promises to the poorest of our electorate, in conjunction with mismanaged state-owned enterprises, the spectre of state capture, which is currently being investigated by the Zondo Commission, vastly increased unemployment. In addition to this, a large section of the population is living below the poverty line and, with the increased levels of criminality, it is no surprise that the South African people are stretched to their limit, resentful, angry and desperate (Du Toit, 2021). This, combined with the lockdown announced by Cyril Ramaphosa on the 26th of March 2020,

which would certainly limit income earning, particularly for those employed by the informal sector, further created a combustible set of circumstances (Singh, 2020) (SAnews, 2020). While it was quite simple for those working in corporate South Africa, with financial means to move across to working from home and adapt to working on computers and Wi-Fi for most of the day, it was not easy and certainly not always possible for the majority of South Africans to do the same (Dube, 2020).

In July 2021, one of the Interpersonal Intelligence workshops took place during the time of unrest in South Africa when large groups of mobilised people looted shopping centres, and cell phone tower batteries and electrical substations were tampered with. This had a direct impact on the connectivity of course participants who were spread throughout the country, some located in the neighbourhoods with the most criminality and looting. During the week of the 12th of July 2021, to further add to the unique constraints within South Africa, our state-owned electricity supplier, Eskom, instituted rolling blackouts (load shedding) which would have influenced many course participants in terms of access to electricity and connectivity (Mbomvu et al., 2021). The implementation of load shedding started in December 2014 and has been prevalent over the last seven years.

So, while moving to online platforms seemed a viable solution for most people in first world countries globally, in South Africa it was a solution for only those who had access to electricity, Wi-Fi and the means to own computers, as well as previous training and knowledge of how to make use of these technologies (Dube, 2020).

1.3 Aim

The aim of my thesis was to explore the differences and similarities between feedback from those who experienced a synchronous online learning-based workshop vs those who had experienced the same workshop in a face-to-face delivery method. The aforementioned workshop is a cognitive behavioural workshop delivered to adults in a corporate environment in South Africa. It is a 4-day workshop, which looks at shifting unhelpful behaviour in both the work and home environment. My research aided in our understanding as to whether there is any difference in terms of experienced value, enjoyment, and engagement on online platforms versus the feedback we have received from face-to-face workshops. This research may assist decision-makers to make more informed choices as to whether to continue developing employees or to cancel training altogether if online learning is the only option. Should there be only limited academic research to base decisions on, there is a risk that corporates will choose to either abandon training or follow their own lead and agendas when it comes to financing training for their employees. This is a potentially big risk that could be mitigated with enough formal research regarding face-to-face versus online learning. My hope was that my thesis would add to the body of formal research on this topic and also provide more relevance in terms of the South African context.

1.4 Motivation

My interest in this research topic emerged from the repercussions of the Coronavirus pandemic, which forced all South Africans to go into lockdown from March 2020. I have owned my business, *Psychology at Work*, for almost 20 years, and have spent the better part of 20 years travelling around South Africa in order to facilitate the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop. The year 2020

arrived hand-in-hand with the onset of the Coronavirus. With the onset of the first wave of the Coronavirus, and subsequent lockdowns restricting the movement of people on a global scale, a large number of employees began working remotely from home. I facilitated workshops all over South Africa and the majority of the business conference and training sections of the organisations were closed. Dhawan (2020) argued that there had been an abrupt switch from organisations making use of the usual face-to-face (traditional) learning environment to now making use of predominantly online learning platforms. Teachers and facilitators have had to modify their methods in order to be able to cope with and adapt to the “new-normal” where wave after wave of the Coronavirus has necessitated the restriction of the traditional face-to-face learning environment (Dhawan, 2020).

I had to very quickly come up with a solution for not being able to fly and train in conference centres. I made sure that any and all workbooks that were needed on the workshops were readily available online and easily accessible to the participants for the workshops, which were conducted over Zoom. I also sent out a pre-course survey, called the Interpersonal Behaviour Survey, which is used to measure different behaviour. My assistant sent this survey out via email and when the workshop participants sent them back, I always print it out and scored it for them. After this I would usually just give the scored sheets back to the participants on the workshop, however I now had to scan it back to each individual via email so that the participants would have it in time for their workshop. At the end of each workshop, I explained to every individual that they should expect a feedback sheet from my company, and I always ensured that every individual was aware that when filling out the feedback sheets that I could use their feedback for the

following: “*Psychology at Work retains permission to use this form for the purpose of research, marketing and testimonials*”. The feedback sheets are then sent back to my assistant via email. This proved to be helpful as I was able to get the feedback from the virtual workshops which I would compare to the face-to-face facilitation feedback sheets that I already had in my possession (also received via email). All feedback sheets were stored electronically in a file on my laptop that was password protected.

Virtual (online) learning in general has expanded dramatically over the last few years, Cavanaugh and Jacquemin (2015) explained that “While the annual growth rate of online enrolment has slowed from an extremely rapid 30%+ rate of ten years ago, it is still increasing at a rate of over 9% every year” (p. 1–2). Prior to the pandemic, works conducted by Allen and Seaman (2013) and, in agreement with Cavanaugh and Jacquemin (2015), found that out of more than 2000 tertiary institutions, almost 7 million students were partaking in a minimum of one online course per year. This increased rate is not unpredicted since more than 70% of tertiary academic heads think that some form of online instruction is critical for their longstanding policy and sustainability (Cavanaugh & Jacquemin, 2015).

Even with the above in mind, nothing could have prepared the world, or South Africa, for the increased use of video conferencing, due to self-isolation as well as compulsory lockdowns. Video conferencing provided a potential solution to keep businesses functioning in a way that allowed for social distancing. The phrase of the year was after all, according to the New York Times, “You are on Mute” (Karaian & June, 2020), which is an indication of just how many people were impacted, and had to learn how to cope with this change from face-to-face to making use of

microphones and streaming platforms.

There was seemingly an abundance of research comparing computer-based learning with classroom learning, which we look at briefly in the literature review (Chapter 2). However, given the sudden growth of these online platforms and the global need to move towards them, there seemed to be an important difference when it came to doing this research. The definition of and what constitutes “online learning” is also important given the emergence and sudden growth of synchronous platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet. For the purpose of this study “online learning” referred to making use of synchronous online learning platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams.

1.5 Description of the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop

My company, *Psychology at Work*, runs a programme called the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop. The workshop runs over four days and aims to help individuals, teams and organisations improve their interpersonal style. This is done by helping them to change any behaviour that is not conducive to healthy relationships and therefore limits the attainment of objectives both at home and at work. A cognitive behavioural methodology is employed as to allow for the best chance of any changes to remain concrete. Given that The Interpersonal Intelligence workshop employs cognitive behavioural techniques, I was concerned that utilising an online platform might interfere with the experiences of the workshop. However, Cuijpers et al. (2008) argued that conducting Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) over the internet (similarly to what we do during the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop) was becoming quite a common practice and could have a number of advantages.

1.6 Problem statement and key research questions

Problem statement

I wanted to determine whether there were any differences or similarities between what individuals experienced during the online cognitive behavioural training workshop versus the face-to-face cognitive behavioural training workshop.

Key research question

What are the differences and similarities between adult learners' experiences of the Cognitive-Behavioural Training workshop when performed virtually versus face-to-face?

Follow up Research questions:

What are the implications of the differences and similarities of these two learning platforms?

1.7 Overview of chapters

There are five chapters contained in this thesis. Each chapter will attempt to better explain and investigate the difference and similarities in experiences of participants in a face-to-face learning scenario versus those utilising synchronous online learning platforms. The chapters follow on from one another as follows:

Chapter 1: This introduction contextualises this investigation by providing an explanation of the unique South African context as well as a brief synopsis of the Aim, Motivation, Context of the study, Description of the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop, Research questions and, lastly, the overview of chapters. The introduction addressed: Why my study is important?; The gap in

knowledge that this study will address; and How will it contribute to generating knowledge? I situated the social relevance of my study in a South African context and lastly, I made sure to explain how the results would be applied.

Chapter 2: This chapter contained the literature review, which mainly focused on historical research of online versus face-to-face learning. The chapter looked at research prior to the Coronavirus uptake of online learning platforms as well as more recent research which looked at specifically comparing face-to-face learning feedback and synchronous online platforms. The literature review also looked at online learning platforms in a South African context as well as behavioural theory and its application within a virtual world. The literature review chapter attempted to address the following issues: The underlying theory and important concepts for my research, to present motivation for my research, as well as to give a review of the most recent research done on this topic.

Chapter 3: This chapter entailed a description of all the qualitative methods used during the course of my research. This chapter included a discussion on thematic analysis, which was the chosen method for this research. This included an in-depth discussion on the description of thematic analysis and an explanation of how I used it in order to analyse my data. You will also find further discussion as to how the samples came about. This chapter also included my self-reflexivity, ethical considerations and, lastly, positioning myself as a subjective being and making sure to do this in order to avoid a conflict of interest in my research.

Chapter 4: This chapter entailed a brief description of the organisations for which we gathered data. It then goes on to present the five higher order themes, “The Link Between Perceived Value and Impact”, “The Effect of an Informal Light-Hearted Learning Environment”, “Engagement Always Wins”, “Gratefulness for Personal Growth”, “Experienced Irritations”, as well as other subthemes that arose organically during the analysis and coding process. In this section I followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six step analysis of the data in order to generate the themes, which enabled further discussion and understanding.

Chapter 5: This chapter looked at some further recommendations for future research into the effectiveness and implications of synchronous online learning. This chapter also considered the possible limitations that could have impacted the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review chapter of my thesis starts by explaining what online learning was, even prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as the rapid emergence of online learning in relation to the Coronavirus pandemic. I discussed the different terminology associated with traditional face-to-face learning as well as different forms of online learning. I also considered online learning in a South African context, which included the many challenges that South Africa is facing with regard to online learning, both in pre-COVID-19 times and after the emergence of the virus. This chapter also included a detailed understanding and description of previous studies done on the subject of online learning, showing negative aspects as well as previous studies on the subject of online learning showing positive aspects. Lastly, this section looked at the importance of engagement while learning or facilitating online, which was seen as vitally important as learning online can be distracting, therefore maximum engagement is needed to keep individuals motivated. The section on engagement also included a brief understanding of how I kept my course participants engaged and motivated on the Interpersonal Intelligence workshops that I hosted.

2.2 Understanding of online learning prior to Coronavirus

Face-to-face teaching, often referred to as traditional teaching, is where one is taught in a physical space such as a classroom or lecture hall (Quinn & Vorster, 2016). Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning had the following definitions: 1) Distance learning, 2) e-learning, 3) online learning, and 4) Blended/hybrid learning (Moore et al., 2010). 1) Distance

education was the most common term used when referring to distance learning, prior to the onset of the Coronavirus and the mass uptake of online learning platforms. The term distance learning referred to the effort that was put in to giving one access to education regardless of their geographical location in the world (Moore et al., 2010). 2) In the article by Moore et al. (2010), they describe e-learning as “strictly being accessible using technological tools that are either web-based, web-distributed, or web-capable” (p. 130). This however, not only included computers and internet but also included audio and video tapes as well as interactive television (Moore et al., 2010). The roots of e-learning are relatively unknown, however, it is suggested that the term e-learning emerged in the late 20th century, around the same time as online learning (Moore et al., 2010). Although e-learning is relatively difficult to describe, Oliver and Trigwell (2005) argue that if learning is taking place where information and communication technologies are being used, then e-learning is being employed. Hence, almost any form of learning or studying that has a connection with a computer is viewed as e-learning. However, the term e-learning does not come with much clarity (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005). 3) Online learning is said to be the most difficult term to describe of the three terms. Online learning is often defined as having access to education or learning through the use of technology (Moore et al., 2010). Online learning is often seen as a more contemporary form of distance learning (Moore et al., 2010). 4) Oliver and Trigwell (2005) define blended or hybrid learning as “the integrated combination of traditional learning with web-based online approaches” (p. 17). Dhawan (2020) explains that what all the above definitions have in common is “the ability to use a computer connected to a network, that offers the possibility to learn from anywhere, anytime, in any rhythm, with any means” (p. 6).

2.3 Coronavirus in relation to the rapid emergence of online learning, and online platforms specifically

In December 2019 a new Coronavirus, recognised as COVID-19, was apparently revealed in a seafood market in Wuhan, China (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). The virus was assessed, and the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic. The influential aspects of this were the rapid spread, as well as the severity, of the virus across most parts of the world (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). As the virus was declared a pandemic by the WHO, an added proclamation of social distancing was introduced as a means of potentially slowing the spread of the pandemic (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). Before the ceasing of face-to-face interaction and learning in both universities and businesses, institutions initially tried to follow rigorous practices in order to try and combat the spread of the virus, this included cleaning across all businesses and campuses, constant communication via email and texts to remind individuals to follow COVID protocol, and reiterating behaviour such as regularly washing one's hands, avoiding touching the face area, while also advising students, faculty, staff and employees alike to remain at home if they felt sick in any way (Liguori & Winkler, 2020).

However, this did not stop the spread of COVID-19 and this created an environment where universities and businesses adopted more radical measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, which included cancelling large, public occurrences and changing most forms of learning and work to online platforms (Liguori & Winkler, 2020). Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) were right in arguing that the pandemic has forced businesses, sports activities and schools to close physically, pushing a large number of establishments to migrate to online platforms or to stay provisionally closed. A

large number of organisations around the world have ceased face-to-face interactions and it remains unclear as to when schools, universities and business will go back to normal (Dhawan, 2020). COVID-19 has forced most institutions to move to online forms of interaction. Many companies were reluctant to shift from face-to-face methods of interacting to online forms of interaction, however the pandemic forced everyone online as it was one of the few ways to ensure that one's business was going to carry on being lucrative (Dhawan, 2020). In addition to this, governments prohibited travel to and from certain regions in the world, which often included both domestic and international flights. Dhawan (2020) even went as far as to say that "Online learning is emerging as the Victor Ludorum amidst this chaos" (p. 7).

The growth of online learning, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, showed no signs of slowing down (May, 2019). Distance learning has been around and has been evolving for at least the last 200 years. Over the course of 200 years there has been substantial shifts in how learning happens and is communicated (Moore et al., 2010). From using a postal system in order for distance learning to occur to the wide variety of tools now available over the internet, society is constantly adapting and embracing new forms of learning.

Murphy and Stewart (2017) explained that the need for online forms of learning has increased dramatically since 2013, with over 5 million University-going students enrolling in a minimum of one online course over the course of the year. Online courses created solutions to previous problems such as not having enough classroom space, the overall cost of education and part-time students needing a flexible learning option as they were unable to attend class every day (Murphy & Stewart, 2017).

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic it was imperative that a solution was found in order for schools, universities and businesses to keep up to date with their work without physically going in to a work or learning environment. One of the simplest solutions was to move meetings, learning and social connection onto an online-platform. Moorhouse (2020) describes synchronous online learning as “real-time live lessons delivered through Video Conferencing Software (VCS)” (p. 2). There are many types of Video Conferencing Software available today. Some of the better-known ones are Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet and Skype. One of the most prominent forms of Video Conferencing Software is Zoom. Zoom’s share price was sitting on approximately 73 Dollars on the 6th of January 2020, after the announcement of the Coronavirus in North America. Zoom share prices increased to just under 560 dollars by the 12th of October 2020 (Liu, 2020).

For the purposes of this study, I defined a face-to-face learning environment as a traditional face-to-face learning environment where course material is taught to participants on the workshop. On my Interpersonal Intelligence workshop participants sit in a u-shape structure with the facilitator (me) standing at the top of the “U”. This U-shape set up allows for the course participants to be able to see body language and facial expressions from all the participants as well as to be able to interact with all the other participants on the workshop as well as the facilitator. Similarly, to Moorhouse (2020), for the purposes of this study, I defined an online learning environment as a live course which takes place via an online platform, which usually takes place via one of three platforms, namely Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 virus forced all educational institutions and facilities to shut down and operate in a remote environment, which in turn allowed for the emergence of a theory called

ERT or “Emergency remote teaching” (Hodges et al., 2020, p. 7). ERT can be distinguished from online learning as online learning is usually a pre-planned programme which was created to be completed via an online platform from the start (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). ERT, however, is seen and defined as a temporary solution used to deliver classes or courses during times of catastrophe or emergency, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (de Klerk et al., 2021). This “type” of online learning is taught in a remote environment via an online platform where course work or material is taught in an environment that would otherwise be delivered in a face-to-face format. The thought behind this is that said course will go back to being taught in a traditional face-to-face classroom set up as soon as the catastrophe has subsided (Karakaya, 2021). The main purpose of ERT was not to recreate a perfect class or course that is usually taught in a face-to-face setting, but instead it aimed to give individuals provisional access to instructions as well as course content and delivery in a way that was efficient and easy to set up and available to a large number of individuals (Hodges et al., 2020). Research has shown that almost 2 billion students ranging from pre-school students to university students had been majorly affected because of the closure of educational institutions due to the outbreak of COVID-19 – this equals about three quarters of students enrolled in schools and universities worldwide (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). One of the biggest and most simple ways to distinguish between ERT and normal online learning, also known as distance learning, is that ERT is vitally needed due to a circumstance, whereas online learning or distance learning is usually a cost effective and time flexible option offered to students and individuals (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

2.4 Previous studies about online learning showing negative aspects

Older studies on the subject of online learning, such as Rovai et al. (2006), argued that scholars rated online courses lower in general than traditional or face-to-face courses. Murphy and Stewart (2017) also argued that the increased use of online learning was not without its setbacks, the number one setback being a large number of student withdrawals from online courses as well as a low level of completion by students who did not study on campus grounds (Rovai, 2003). Murphy and Stewart (2017) explain that course completion was much more common amongst students who took part in a traditional face-to-face learning environment than online. Findings such as these have led researchers such as Murphy and Stewart (2017) to believe that students going in to their first year of university were not well enough equipped for online courses. The type of online classes which had the highest non-completion or withdrawal rate was for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) online classes. Although there has been much disagreement surrounding whether online learning environments are experienced as effective as face-to-face learning environments, if these online courses are not being completed by students then we would be unable to measure their experiences of effectiveness and any potential positive benefit is nullified by the negative aspects that came with not completing the course (Rovai, 2003). Researchers have come to the conclusion that online courses have at least a 30% higher course dropout rate than traditional classroom-based face-to-face courses (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). Due to these results, the number of students withdrawing from online courses has been emphasised with regard to its overall levels of experienced effectiveness, as Murphy and Stewart (2017) explained that it was pointless for students to have access to these online courses if they are not

going to complete them, enrolling in the course being simply experienced as not as effective as completing the course.

In agreement with Patterson and McFadden (2009), Murphy and Stewart (2017) further elaborate that a significant reason that the rate of withdrawal or incompleteness of online courses is so low is connected to the subject that you are taking as an online course. Academics have concluded that one's academic subject choices do in fact influence one's level of completion as well as the dropout rate from online courses, with STEM subjects, such as mathematics for example, being more negatively impacted than other academic subjects (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). It is vital that researchers understand what keeps online enrolment rates up amongst students, thus researchers have devised a list of potential factors that could go hand-in-hand with the withdrawal and the non-completion rates of students doing online courses. These factors include the age of students, whether the student is male or female and the year that the student is completing (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). However, later research indicated that other factors play a role in this, such as one's academic background, academic skill set and previous experiences of online courses (Wladis et al., 2015). These factors are said to increase online course completion in students (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). The factors that can lead to the incompleteness of online courses include: students with low achieving academic performance, poor technological abilities, and no previous experience in taking online classes (Wladis et al., 2017). Such students are most likely to enrol in online courses but are unlikely to complete the whole course (Wladis et al., 2017).

Rovai et al. (2006) argued that scholars commonly felt inadequately equipped to manage online courses and therefore reported feeling less able to communicate, and lower levels of

communication both at the peer as well as at the instructor level. Rovai et al. (2006) further stated that courses making use of online processes are experienced as less effective when it comes to learning outcomes, compared to those courses that make use of face-to-face or classroom-based methodologies. However, more recent studies by Cavanaugh and Jacquemin (2015) suggest that there is limited to no difference between grades achieved in learner performance between online and face-to-face courses.

In academic writing there is much disagreement concerning the experienced effectiveness of online courses (versus face-to-face courses) with regard to students attaining their desired academic results (Cavanaugh & Jacquemin, 2015). However, in comparison to the amount of studies that found that online learning had a positive effect on learning outcomes in the online format, the number of studies that found a negative effect is much smaller, but can however not be ignored (Nguyen, 2015). Many studies were in complete contradiction to the studies that show positive results (Nguyen, 2015). In these findings it was discovered that pupils did not perform as well in the online set-up, in contrast to the performance achieved by those participating in the face-to-face/traditional set-up (Nguyen, 2015). In this study they found that there were negative effects for certain groups of scholars and null findings for others (Nguyen, 2015). A study was conducted comparing students' learning outcomes in a microeconomics course, and the findings suggested that students on the online platform did considerably worse on assessments than scholars in a typical face-to-face setting (Nguyen, 2015). In an article by Moorhouse (2020), findings were that a limited number of students chose to join his online classes. For those students who were present, they hardly spoke or interacted, and when they did interact, they did so on the "type in" chat option

where they could type instead of speak. Therefore, it is clear that synchronous online teaching commands a “new and extended skills set” (Moorhouse, 2020, p. 2).

2.5 Previous studies about online learning showing positive aspects

The majority of studies done on this topic found that there was very little difference in the grades that pupils achieved when looking at the separate methods of facilitation (Cavanaugh & Jacquemin, 2015). At the same time, online learning has many advantages such as the flexibility it allows individuals to have in terms of working from home or any location in the world without physically having to go in to a physical space such as an office or classroom (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). A further positive aspect of online learning is the fact that one can do work or learn at one’s own pace, without the pressure of completing work during specific office or classroom time. Additionally, one would be able to interact with individuals all over the world without having to fly or drive to different destinations (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). Online learning is often viewed as a cost-effective way of working or studying, as organisations have to use limited resources due to individuals working from home (Nguyen, 2015). Organisations making use of online workshops need not pay for venue, transport or food costs as one would normally have to when using conference centres.

According to May (2019) the role of student-facilitator interaction is vital as it is the facilitator’s responsibility to increase online interactions so that the pupils get the most out of the class or workshop. Therefore, a teacher or facilitator’s presence and communication are imperative for any type of online learning (May, 2019). In order for online workshops or classes to be experienced as effective the interactions for online teaching should be recurrent as well as diverse in order to aid

students to feel connected to the learning environment even though it is not face-to-face, as well as to continue to feel engaged as well as interested (May, 2019). Furthermore, in the study conducted by May (2019) it emerged that students' outcomes in online classes were as good as face-to-face classes. This was interesting, as even though the classes were not face-to-face, the dissimilarity in interactions proved to have no negative effect on learning outcomes (Kreie et al., 2017).

Ng (2018) argues that online learning is transforming the way that learners interact with instructors or course facilitators. May (2019) compared face-to-face courses with online courses in order to decide which method, online or face-to-face, provided the best possible outcome for students. It was found that the method of delivery was much less important than other leading factors. These factors include a) significant interaction between students and students, b) interaction between teachers and students, and lastly c) the interactions between the students and the content being presented during these online classes (May, 2019). Furthermore, it emerged that time spent in live synchronous online sessions alone emerged as a significant predictor of excelling in courses (May, 2019). After a semester of comparing face-to-face with online teaching, the performance from the students as well as evaluations were found to be alike across both delivery methods, namely online and face-to-face (Kreie et al., 2017). The role that interaction plays with regard to online courses is a topic that raises concerns, thus Hoey (2017) explains that engaging discussions and reading instructional posts improved students' views of learning.

Although there has been much research to disprove this (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Cavanaugh & Jacquemin, 2015; Ng, 2018), online learning still often comes with the stigma that it is

experienced as a less effective format of teaching than face-to-face learning (Hodges et al., 2020). Hodges et al. (2020) explained that a significant contributing factor to the reason why online learning is experienced as less effective is due to the quick move that needed to happen from traditional face-to-face courses to online courses with the onset of the COVID pandemic. However, Hodges et al. (2020) further explain that research has shown that most teachers and facilitators are not taking full advantage of the opportunities that an online learning environment has to offer. Online learning has been researched for years, long before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic forced many schools and businesses to close and/or make the quick move to online learning platforms. Research by scholars such as Hodges et al. (2020) explain that the experience of effective online learning happens from “careful instructional design and planning” (p. 4). This is why online learning is not seen as being experienced as effective during the COVID pandemic as individuals, businesses, organisations, schools and universities have not had sufficient time to prepare for the jump to online learning due to the emergency status of world-wide lockdown (Hodges et al., 2020).

2.6 The importance of engagement with regard to course delivery method

Student engagement refers to the active participation of students, which has a positive connection to learner outcomes (Lei et al., 2018). Student engagement is vitally important regardless of the delivery method of the class or course, as getting students to engage in learning increases their overall likelihood to succeed as well as to ensure a higher level of knowledge retention (May, 2019). Roorda et al. (2017) found that teacher-student engagement played a vital role in higher education due to the fact that as students get older, they become naturally less engaged.

Earlier studies done on the subject assumed that students or course participants were separated from their instructors or teachers because of physical distance; this often-caused holes in communication as well as misunderstandings on a greater scale (May 2019). However, due to huge advancements in technology online platforms have become much more efficient and readily available to a large part of the population and therefore started to help bridge the gap or distance between learners and facilitators (Roorda et al., 2017). May (2019) focused on a concept called “immediacy” which refers to levels of communicative behaviours that help us with regard to feeling physically or psychologically close to someone, which can supposedly minimise feelings of distance between individuals. There are two forms of “immediacy”, namely verbal and non-verbal. Non-verbal immediacy refers to feeling psychologically close to someone, which usually emerges from “facial expression, eye contact, posture, proximity, and touch” (May, 2019, p. 16). Verbal immediacy represents how people feel close to each other due to their choice of words, such as “cadence, tone, asking questions, using humour, addressing individuals by name, initiating discussion, and sharing personal examples” (May, 2019, p. 16). It was found that non-verbal behaviours amplified sensory stimulation, which in turn allowed for integration and communication to be much more experienced as effective (May, 2019). I use both verbal and non-verbal immediacy in my workshop to allow for optimal engagement from my course participants.

Regardless of the development of online learning, we cannot think that online learning is without its fair share of problems. An example of this is that not many individuals follow through and complete online courses, often having to repeat the courses. A major problem with regard to online courses is that there are higher levels of disengagement compared to traditional face-to-face

courses (Roorda et al., 2017). It is therefore vital that lecturers, teachers and facilitators keep students and/or course participants actively engaged during online courses as it is vital that the individuals on these courses experience a sense of social cohesion as humans crave social interaction (May, 2019). Online education is seen as an integral part of learning in this day and age, even before the emergence of COVID-19. Online platforms allow educators and facilitators access to students all around the world, who without an online option may not have ever applied (May, 2019). The option to attend a course online also decreases the amount of money needed in delivering a workshop or class, which makes it more accessible to larger numbers of people (May, 2019).

2.7 The specific challenges with regard to online learning in a South African context

Whilst there has been a dramatic move from face-to-face learning to online learning since the emergence of the Coronavirus, it is important to note this in a South African context. The emergence of online learning pre-COVID was already emerging at a rapid pace in South Africa. During this time a shift was occurring from traditional face-to-face learning, which was viewed as unconventional, to online learning (Damoense, 2003). Since the appearance of online learning was happening all over the world, South Africa had to try to keep up regardless of their lack of infrastructure or lack of resources in many rural communities (Dube, 2020). Damoense (2003) explains that by the early 2000s around three hundred thousand South African school-going children and university students moved to online learning platforms. South Africa was expected to experience a boom in online learning options at a university level, exposing more and more students specifically to the new technologies of e-learning (Damoense, 2003). However, many

teachers and students were under skilled with regard to navigating the world of online learning and teaching (Damoense, 2003). In addition to this, South African Universities have been experiencing big changes over the course of the last 20 years. As Damoense (2003) put it, “South Africa’s higher education system is presently experiencing major transformation and restructuring that poses further challenges for educators and learners” (p. 26). The biggest transformation has been the inclusion of previously disadvantaged students of colour into historically “white” universities. This does leave South Africa with a large number of university-going students who have been previously disadvantaged and underprepared when it comes to the use of technology as well as higher education (Damoense, 2003).

South Africa is a country where many students live far away from large educational institutions in remote areas, that is why the use of computers and online learning was initially seen as being a great means of communicating with remote learners as time and geographical locations are non-issues when it comes to learning online (Damoense, 2003). However, both Damoense (2003) and Dube (2020) elaborate that a lack of infrastructure has caused many hurdles for learners in South Africa. South Africa also faces further hurdles such as socio-economic problems, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the large sector of the population that are poverty-stricken as well as the high unemployment rate in South Africa (Damoense, 2003). These are all factors that place significant strain on South Africa’s financial resources, putting online education on the back burner (Damoense, 2003).

Whilst moving to an online platform can be seen all around the world, specifically relating to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, this does raise concerns relating to infrastructure, internet

connection and the possibility of a further divide in terms of inequalities (Jordan et al., 2021). A big challenge that South African's have had to face is the fact that schools closed down in such a speedy manner that there was almost no time for schools and educators to prepare or help school children or university students transition to an online learning platform (Jordan et al., 2021). A large section of the curriculum that was taught in schools in a normal face-to-face environment could not be modified to an online teaching environment in a timely manner. Thus, students faced the daunting truth that is the uncertainty of the school year that lay ahead of them (Jordan et al., 2021). Jordan et al. (2021) argued that the closure of schools was particularly affecting primary school students who relied on school as the foundation in order to be able to learn effectively in high school and even at a university level. Even pre-COVID, due to the lack of financial resources available in South Africa, it had been difficult to find educators who had the skills to navigate and teach on an online platform. However, the idea of online learning growing in general in South Africa would be welcomed as learners would be given access to education regardless of where they lived in South Africa (Damoense, 2003).

Since the emergence of the COVID-19 virus, South Africa has faced many challenges when it comes to implementing online teaching/learning methods. Many individuals have limited access to technology or an appropriate working environment in their homes (Jordan et al., 2021). These technologies include not having access to online resources such as the internet or even access to computers. Jordan et al. (2021) explains that less than 40% of the population in Africa have access to the internet. In addition, South Africa has a lack of tech-savvy educators who can offer assistance to individuals with regard to online learning (Dube, 2020). In conjunction to this, in

many informal parts of South Africa many adults did not have access to formal education and therefore could not help younger students with their homework and studies at home (Jordan et al., 2021). Another challenge that South Africans faced was the fact that not all people had access to electricity (Dube, 2020). The concern broadens the gap between the underprivileged and the wealthy, which seems in contrast to the aim of combating the Coronavirus as a nation (Dube, 2020).

In a school context South Africa has faced many challenges during the pandemic, as Dube (2020) and Bozkurt and Sharma (2020) point out that the main procedure to stop the spread of COVID-19 is to enforce social distancing as well as not allowing the gathering of large numbers of people. This is almost impossible in rural South Africa as students are taught in a face-to-face environment with a teacher in close proximity to them, however they do not have access to the necessary equipment to have classes online. This posed a huge threat as all children have to write exams at the same time of year (Dube, 2020). To make matters worse many non-essential workers lost their jobs during this time and therefore could not afford to set up an online learning environment for their children to attend online school or university, due to a loss of income (Dube, 2020). Whilst the use of online platforms has been very helpful in terms of creating an online environment where schools and businesses could continue to function, we cannot ignore the fact that online learning excludes many learners in rural parts of South Africa (Dube, 2020). In addition to a lack of technology and connectivity in many areas of South Africa, this also places South Africans at more risk due to lack of exposure to online sources and educational sites which help to pass on information to help stop the spread of COVID-19 (Dube, 2020). Dube (2020) further elaborated

on the fact that parents complained when schools instructed their children to move to online learning, due to the fact that very few households had access to a laptop or a smart phone. School children further explained that they could not even visit relatives who had access to laptops and internet due to the restriction of movement during the first phase of the lockdown (Dube, 2020). Bozkurt and Sharma (2020) argue that the world wide shut down of schools and universities caused a bigger division in term of learning inequalities, which has caused much distress and harm to vulnerable children. It is vital to remember that education is a basic human right, a human right that many in rural South Africa are struggling to keep up due to the many setbacks, as listed above (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

2.8 Theoretical framework

Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus in late 2019, the closure of schools has affected over a billion students worldwide. This has created an area of opportunity for teachers to think of new strategies to increase students' level of engagement and change their usual teaching practices to allow for remote learning to happen (Zayapragassarazan, 2020). The urgent manner in which the world, but specifically schools and universities, had to shift from classroom-based face-to-face learning to online learning and teaching, led to many challenges being faced by teachers, facilitators and students (Chiu, 2021). A huge issue that arose from the shift to online learning in students is their increased levels of anxiety and stress that they experience, which can lead to a whole host of mental health problems (Chiu, 2021). Many students struggle to adjust to learning environments that do not incorporate the normal classroom learning environment and many students already struggle to keep up with their studies, to keep motivated and engaged (Chiu, 2021). The teenage years are a

particularly volatile time when students struggle to keep motivated and engaged during lessons, never mind trying to keep engagement up during online classes (Chiu, 2021).

I considered Cognitive Behavioural Theory as my theoretical framework, and I looked at how Cognitive Behavioural Theory would fit with my data. However upon further investigation I decided that the Self-Determination theory would be a more suitable fit for the purpose of my study. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a large-scale theory on keeping individuals motivated and engaged (Reeve, 2013). The theory, as explained by Reeve (2013) and Chiu (2021), looked at explaining the subtleties of human motivation in a social setting. This specific theory argued that all humans have three vital needs which shifts them in to act or not to act, these include: “autonomy” (p. 2), “competence” (p. 2), and “relatedness” (p. 2). Autonomy is described as having a sense of self-governance over one’s own self (Chiu, 2021). Competence is described as feeling capable in one’s own abilities (Chiu, 2021). Lastly, relatedness refers to feeling a connection to others (Chiu, 2021). A person’s psychological well-being is satisfied through the presence of all three psychological needs, however at the same time individuals do tend to be oversensitive when not all three of these needs are met (Chiu, 2021). Teacher support also has three dimensions which are included in the Self-determination theory to be used during teaching or facilitating. Chiu (2021) explains that these three dimensions are “autonomy support, structure and involvement” (p. 2), also known as autonomy, competence and relatedness. By teachers using these three dimensions whilst teaching, they encourage and promote positive learning outcomes and engagement (Chiu, 2021).

Teachers or facilitators play a key role in keeping students motivated during online learning. Teachers who support autonomy in the online learning environment increase individuals' levels of motivation, engagement, fun during lessons or classes and interaction with their teachers and peers (Reeve, 2013). Teachers who use structure in order to make sure that what is expected of each child is clear, help create a learning environment where students are made to feel competent in their abilities and able to tackle challenging work (Chiu, 2021). Teachers do this by creating well-structured lesson plans, creating an environment where students can interact with one another and not just with the teacher, providing the students with clear boundaries, using positive words to encourage the students as well as giving students clear and constructive feedback on tests and exams (Chiu, 2021). Lastly, teachers who use involvement in their teaching practices, such as showing warmth and happiness to the students, create a space that inspires mutually caring relationships between students and teachers. Teachers do this by being emotionally available and open with the students and create a space where the individuals feel accepted and free to ask for help and guidance (Chiu, 2021).

In my own workshop, the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop, I use the Self-Determination Theory in order to create an environment where my participants see me as approachable and engaging. When I host my workshops, I make sure to check in with each individual daily and greet each person by name as they join the virtual session. I make sure to ask opinions and questions to keep everyone involved, often asking them to share examples of their everyday experiences. As Chiu (2021) suggests, I make sure that the course outcomes are clear on the first day, explaining what each participant will expect from their four days on the workshop. I also send them a course

workbook in advance in case they want to spend some time going through it before the workshop begins.

In my own research, the level of engagement I received from our participants on the workshop was one of our first hurdles I had to overcome. Similar to works by Dracup (2012), in order to ensure maximum engagement, I ensure before the start of the workshop that every participants' camera, microphone and Wi-Fi is working so that they can take a more active part in the workshop without just using the "type in" chat option. This also allows me to see their body language, connect with each autonomous person, which helps me increase their level of engagement. I also make sure to incorporate lots of humour to keep them engaged and entertained. Lastly, I use role-play as a way of keeping our participants engaged, as they have to give examples and act out certain scenarios that they want to work on in the workplace or at home (Dracup, 2012). This allows me to make sure that the participants are actively involved throughout the workshop, and consistently speaking up. This is similar to works by Roorda et al. (2017) who explained that an individual's level of engagement with regard to work increases dramatically when an individual's basic psychological need to feel related to and treated as an autonomous person are met. Roorda et al. (2017) argued that this can be achieved by facilitators showing involvement through using compassion and expressing an interest in each pupil individually as well as offering a structured environment where rules and expected behaviour are clearly set out by the facilitator. This supportive behaviour shown by facilitators increases student engagement and in turn helps them to achieve better results (Roorda et al., 2017).

Roorda et al. (2017) explained that school-going children are motivated by student-teacher relationships that are high in terms of warmth and acceptance in terms of their relationship and low on conflict in terms of student-teacher relationships, which helps young people feel “emotionally secure” (p. 240). This creates an environment where children’s emotional security allows them to better explore their classroom surroundings and perform better academically (Reeve, 2013). Thus, these positive aspects make a significant impact on academic achievement and engagement during class time (Roorda et al., 2017). However, it is vital to note that in primary school children a negative relationship or a negative interaction with a teacher is more closely linked to student engagement than positive relationships, therefore it is much more likely that a child will disengage from one or two negative interactions than engage after having numerous positive interactions (Roorda et al., 2017).

Similarly to Dracup (2012), who uses certain techniques to keep participants engaged during online workshops, Zayapragassarazan (2020) offers ways to improve learner engagement, specifically in higher education learners. Zayapragassarazan (2020) explains that using tools on online platforms such as Zoom, there are numerous tools available such as splitting into different rooms where students can break apart and do group projects and the teacher can check in to the rooms. There are also free programmes that can be used, for example, multiple choice questions, which also help for increased engagements from students as they have to submit an answer (Zayapragassarazan, 2020).

While the participants knew that they would not be graded on any answer, the game still created a fun and competitive environment where the course participants were eager to get the answers right

in front of their colleagues, as it gets displayed on the screen. This in turn heightened engagement and created an environment filled with humour and light-heartedness whilst still shifting behaviour as the course intended.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to give the readers an understanding of the historical research of online versus face-to-face learning. This chapter also gave the reader a review of the most recent research done on this topic. This chapter provided a deeper understanding of the Corona Virus and the effect that it had on businesses and learning institutions all around the world as well as exploring online learning platforms in a South African context as well as behavioural theory and its application within a virtual world. Lastly this chapter examined the underlying theory and important concepts for my research, namely, The Self-Determination Theory, which looked at explaining the subtleties of human motivation in a social setting.

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explained my research design as well as the methods used to address the aims of this study. I also made sure to be self-reflexive in the methods section as well as highlight any potential conflict of interest, as I was fully aware that I am a subjective being. This chapter is divided into the following sections: Theoretical points of departure, Problem statement (rationale) and research question(s), Research design, Sample and sampling strategy, as well as containing a description of the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop. This section also contained a section on the trustworthiness of the research, Potential conflict of interest and being aware of my subjectivities, Self- reflexivity and, lastly, Ethical considerations.

3.2 Problem statement and key research questions:

Problem statement

I wanted to determine whether there were any differences or similarities between what individuals experienced during the online cognitive behavioural training workshop versus the face-to-face cognitive behavioural training workshop.

Key research question

What are the differences and similarities between adult learners' experiences of the cognitive-behavioural training workshop when performed virtually versus face-to-face?

3.2.1 Follow-up research questions

What are the implications of the differences and similarities of these two learning platforms?

3.3 Research design

The aim of my thesis was to explore the differences and similarities between feedback from those who experienced a synchronous online based workshop versus those who had experienced the same workshop in a face-to-face delivery method. The aforementioned workshop is a cognitive behavioural workshop delivered to adults in a corporate environment in South Africa (which I explain more about in the *Description of the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop* in section 3.6 of this thesis).

This thesis started by utilising a qualitative research design to investigate feedback sheets to determine how the adult learners experienced the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop, whether it was via a face-to-face workshop or via an online workshop. Much like Rovai et al. (2006), I utilised this approach to determine if there was a difference between online streaming and face-to-face facilitation. I have received feedback sheets from both the face-to-face (in-person) workshops and the virtual (online, streaming) workshops.

I employed thematic analysis in order to analyse my data and to identify and verify themes and patterns (Rovai et al., 2006). One of the advantages of thematic analysis is its flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In my research I employed theoretical thematic analysis, which is motivated by the researcher's theoretical or analytical interest of the topic. This form of thematic analysis focuses less on the description of the data and more on a thorough analysis of certain characteristics of the

data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I coded my data in terms of quite specific research questions, which was in line with a theoretical thematic analysis. For the purpose of my research the epistemological approach is that of constructionism. The purpose of the research epistemology is that it guides one in terms of what to say about your data and it helps to theorise meaning within your data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) explained that in terms of a constructionist perspective, “meaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced, rather than inhering within individuals” (p. 85). A thematic analysis is the process of deeply examining a data set in order to find patterns that are repeated in order to give the data meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I was aware that there have been more recent works conducted by Braun and Clarke (2019), however, for the purposes of my study I am using their older paper (2006) to structure my thematic analysis. I did, however, refer to their more recent work in terms of my reflexivity.

Table 3.1 below is from Braun and Clarke’s (2019) “Key conceptualizations around thematic analysis: Then and now” (p. 593).

Table 3.1

Key Conceptualizations around Thematic Analysis: Then and Now (Braun and Clarke, 2019)

Then	Now
Not 'getting it' (them) versus 'getting it' (us)	There are several clusters of TA approaches each with different philosophical assumptions and procedural practices that reflect these assumptions (we call these coding reliability TA, codebook TA and reflexive TA).
TA is theoretically flexible	In specific iterations of TA, flexibility is more or less constrained by paradigmatic and epistemological assumptions around meaningful knowledge production; reflexive TA procedures reflect the values of a qualitative paradigm, centring researcher subjectivity, organic and recursive coding processes, and the importance of deep reflection on, and engagement with, data.
Themes <i>are</i> themes	There are different conceptualisations of a theme – domain summaries versus patterns of shared meaning, underpinned by a central meaning-based concept.
Searching for themes	We now prefer the term 'generating (initial) themes' to emphasise that themes are not 'in' the data, pre-existing analysis, awaiting retrieval.

3.3.1 Data Collection Instrument

Whilst conducting the workshop in the past, prior to conducting this research, participants from both the online and face-to-face workshops were requested to fill out a feedback sheet and email it back to my assistant. The initial reason for creating these feedback sheets was to ascertain course participants' satisfaction and to assess whether they would recommend the workshop and be utilised more by their respective organization. The information was often then fed back to the different organization's Human Resources departments to give them feedback from the participants overall experiences. This data previously collected seemed rich with information and it would have been a pity not to utilise. The Interpersonal Intelligence workshop feedback sheet can be viewed under Appendix A. Given that I utilised the individual participants own words from the feedback sheets, the feedback sheet can be used as a qualitative collection measure and therefore as data for my research.

3.4 Analysis

Braun and Clarke's 2019 article does not give one a step-by-step guide to conducting a thematic analysis. Thus, I used Braun and Clarke's 2006 article to get a step-by-step guide to conducting a thematic analysis. I then considered Braun and Clarke's 2019 writings in terms of how it helps in conducting a thematic analysis. Braun and Clark (2006) offer a six-step guide to conducting a thematic analysis, which is what I used in order to analyse my data. The first step was "familiarizing yourself with your data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87), which entailed repeatedly reading the data. In my case I read and re-read the feedback sheets. While I read through my data, I was constantly looking for meanings and patterns throughout the data. I made sure to read through my feedback sheets with an open mind. Through the analysis process it became evident as to why qualitative research uses smaller sample sizes, as the process of continuously re-reading one's data takes up a lot of time (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step in the thematic analysis process was the starting point for the more formal process, known as coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The second step of the thematic analysis process was "generating initial codes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). Step 2 started once I had become familiar with my data through the process of reading and re-reading the feedback sheets. In addition to this, I had already put together a list of ideas of what I found interesting and worth noting in the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step involved the first stage of creating initial codes within the data. The codes given during the analysis of the data revealed a characteristic of the data, in my case semantic content, which the researcher finds fascinating (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step also involved putting one's data into meaningful groups (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step three of a thematic analysis was titled “searching for themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). This phase started when the data had been coded and you have a substantial number of codes that have been identified from the data, in my case the feedback sheets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step of the process of a thematic analysis included focusing one’s analysis on broader themes that arose during the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In essence, this step included analysing the codes you already identified in the previous steps and thinking about how these codes could come together to create main themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some of the codes formed “main themes and some formed sub-themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 90).

Step four of a thematic analysis was titled “reviewing themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). This step began once I had developed some of my themes and I was ready to start making them more refined (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step included two levels of improving one’s themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first step included looking through all the coded data extracts that had been identified so far in order to determine whether they produced a “coherent pattern” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). I did this by looking at all the extracts that I had planned under each theme. Once the overarching themes formed a “coherent pattern” then one could move on to the next step (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Only after one was content that the candidate themes fully encapsulate the coded data, could they move onto the next step (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The second step of this process was much like the first step, except it looked at the data set as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this step, one examines the validity of a specific theme with regard to a set of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step five of the thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006) was titled “Defining themes” (p. 92). According to Braun and Clarke (2006) this step started when one has a “satisfactory thematic map of your data” (p. 92). By this stage I had gone over my themes numerous times in terms of what I would be presenting in my analysis. I did this in order to get a better understanding of the core meaning of what each theme is truly about (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I made sure not to make my themes too complicated, which I achieved through referring back to the data extracts for each individual theme and laying them out in a comprehensible way. After I was able to identify my themes, I wrote a detailed analysis on each theme using extracts to help support my analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I was also cognisant of the fact that my themes needed to relate to my specific research questions. I managed this by ending each theme with a discussion of what information was generated from the online group and what information was generated from the face-to-face group. At this point of the analysis, I was able to define exactly what my themes and subthemes were going to be, as well as starting to think what each theme was going to be titled (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I also attempted to make sure that the titles to my themes stood out to the reader.

Step six of the thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), was titled “producing the report” (p. 93). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), step six started as soon as I had all my themes identified and therefore this step also included the completed written analysis. I made sure that my written analysis included enough extracts from my data in order to back up the points I was trying to make and to do my themes as well as my research questions justice (Braun & Clarke 2006).

3.5 Sample and sampling strategy

In order to gather data for this study, I used the feedback sheets that were returned to my assistant at the end of every workshop I held during the period 2018–2021. Some of these workshops were conducted in a face-to-face environment and some of the workshops took place online. The sample groups used were working-class adults who work in a corporate environment in South Africa. After each one of my Interpersonal Intelligence workshops that I conducted I asked the participants to fill out a feedback sheet and email it back to my assistant. As such the data was collected prior to the onset of this research. The data was collected from individuals that attended the online Interpersonal Intelligence workshop and then another group of completely different individuals who attended the face-to-face Interpersonal Intelligence workshop.

The sampling strategy for this thesis was purposeful sampling. It is a type of non-random sampling, where participants are selected due to meeting certain criteria, for instance, willingly being a part of these workshops, in my case the adults that participate in my workshops are pre-selected by their company to partake in order to develop personally. However, anyone in these companies or organisations are allowed to come to this workshop for personal self-development. The workshop aims to shift behaviour at work and at home for the individual's own benefit. Not all the adults attending the workshop filled in the feedback sheet and sent it back to my assistant; we utilised the ones that we received.

The advantage of purposeful sampling is that the subjects are readily available and easily accessible and are selected on the premise of the needs of one's research or study (Coyne, 1997). Another advantage of purposeful sampling is that the sample group is shaped by the research

themselves, such as the amount of time they have to get the research done as well as their interest in the topic (Coyne, 1997). The researcher selects the sample according to the “aims of the research” (Coyne, 1997, p. 624). One of the biggest advantages of purposeful sampling is the fact that the sample group is chosen by selecting individuals who can give rich and meaningful data, which address the importance of the chosen topic in one’s research (Coyne, 1997). Purposeful sampling tends to focus on a small sample size, which has been quite specifically selected for the purpose of one’s study (Coyne, 1997). The disadvantage is that I cannot assume that the results would be the same as if I used a random sample (Etikan et al., 2016). Etikan et al. (2016) argued that “What makes purposeful sampling so unpredictable is their vulnerability to severe hidden biases” (p. 2).

In terms of my sample size, I have gathered 41 feedback sheets from the virtual/online workshop. I have gathered 70 feedback sheets from the face-to-face workshops. The reason I am using the above numbers in terms of the feedback sheets we received is based on workshops that I held during the period 2018–2021. In 2018 I added the footnote to my feedback sheets which stated “*Psychology at Work retains permission to use this form for the purpose of research, marketing and testimonials*”. I could not use the old feedback sheets as they did not contain a disclaimer as to what the feedback would be used for, specifically with regard to giving me permission to use the feedback for academic research purposes. Another reason why I only used feedback sheets from 2018–2021 is that in 2018 I employed my new personal assistant and from then on only she received the feedback from the individuals who took part in the workshop. This turned out to be very useful as she was able to de-identify all the feedback sheets before I was able to see them,

which prevented me, during the analysis part of my thesis, from linking any feedback sheet to an individual or company, as biases are difficult to mitigate due to humans being subjective beings.

3.6 Description of the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop

My company, *Psychology at Work*, runs a programme called the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop. The workshop runs over four days and aims to help individuals, teams and organisations improve their interpersonal style by helping them to change any behaviour that is not conducive to healthy relationships and therefore limits the attainment of objectives both at home and at work. A cognitive behavioural methodology is used in order to allow for sustained change to happen on these workshops and even after the workshop has ended.

The Interpersonal Intelligence workshop is a cognitive behaviour workshop. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), developed from Aaron Beck's cognitive therapy (CT), was originally established to treat patients with Major Depressive disorder. The therapy's purpose was to bring awareness to the maladjusted beliefs that can negatively affect one's emotional state as well as attitude and behaviour (Beck & Beck, 2011). CBT concentrates on these maladjusted viewpoints, utilising various techniques and methodologies. The therapist or facilitator, using these processes, can thereby assist with altering behaviour and emotional states that are deemed as undesirable or inappropriate (Parker et al., 2003). These cognitive behavioural techniques are utilised in both clinical as well as sub-clinical settings. The Interpersonal Intelligence workshop is an example of a sub-clinical setting where cognitive behavioural techniques are employed. The workshop teaches the participants the skills needed in order to shift irrational/ineffective thoughts and replace them

with thoughts that are more conducive to achieving a rational mindset, and effective behaviour is transferred to each individual on the workshop.

Cognitive behavioural interventions are the most widely investigated psychological treatment to date (Cuijpers et al., 2008). Cognitive behavioural interventions are employed in order to omit negative unconscious thoughts and maladjusted beliefs (Parker et al., 2003). Cognitive behavioural interventions also aim to change certain behavioural patterns which relate to a specific issue that is being worked through during therapy sessions (Cuijpers et al., 2008). Hundreds of published studies have looked at Cognitive behavioural theory for a large amount of disorders and health problems, from mental health disorders such as depression, to headaches, trouble sleeping and cancer and endless other physical and mental illness disorders (Cuijpers et al., 2008). The majority of the above studies have concluded that CBT has positive effects on almost all health conditions, and it is not only the most researched type of psychotherapy, but also the most widely employed form of psychotherapy (Cuijpers et al., 2008).

Cuijpers et al. (2008) argued that conducting CBT over the internet (through my Interpersonal Intelligence workshop) was becoming quite a common practice and could have a number of advantages. A few examples of how CBT over the internet could have a number of advantages, are that it saves the therapist, or in my case the facilitator, time and money, it can reduce long waiting periods for clients as the internet is readily available at any time, it also saves on travel time and petrol costs for both the facilitator and the clients (Cuijpers et al., 2008). Furthermore, the internet and platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams allow for quite a wide option of tools to work with, such as presenting on a “share-screen” and annotating different diagrams,

which allows for more audio-visual information to be accessed by the client. Lastly internet-based CBT can reach people with health/mental problems all over the world. In my case I could not access my clients as I was unable to fly or facilitate in a face-to-face environment because of COVID-19, therefore internet-based CBT was my only option for keeping my business running and my client's needs met during South Africa's national lockdown.

3.7 Trustworthiness of the research

Given (2008) argued that trustworthiness is an essential concept in qualitative research. Given (2008) further explained that in order for one to test for trustworthiness in a qualitative study, four concepts needed to be employed, namely 1) transferability – refers to the need to be aware of whether the results of a study can be applied to different contexts as well as different participants; 2) Credibility – this is where the researcher must be sure that the phenomenon has been correctly explained, making sure that one measured what they were meant to and that the data were accurately represented; 3) dependability – this is where a researcher explicitly explains the procedure used as well as the instruments used in order to allow others to collect their own data in similar contexts; 4) confirmability – ensures that the findings and the interpretations match the data and the viewpoints of the research participants, not the views of the researcher.

In order to establish transferability in my research I provided a detailed description of how I gathered my data. I also indicated what groups of people attended my Interpersonal Intelligence workshops in order to allow other researchers to conduct a similar study with different research participants. In order to establish credibility of my study I scheduled regular meetings with my supervisor. I was also sure to constantly compare my work and research to similar studies that have

been done. In addition to this I was thorough in terms of measuring what I set out to measure, which in my case was a comparative study of participants' experiences of Online vs. Face-to-Face Facilitation. In terms of accurately representing my data, I was aware that I am a subjective being and I was aware of my biases. My research assistant focussed on de-identifying the feedback sheets and my supervisor and I constantly held our ethical responsibility as well as our own subjectivity with regard while doing the research. In order to establish dependability of my study I have explained my whole study in detail, such as the research design, methodology, participants, as well as data collection and analysis. I have done this in order to confirm the study's reliability and for other researchers to be able to conduct similar studies. In my case the feedback sheets from my Interpersonal Intelligence workshop were the data gathered and I put a stipulation on all my feedback sheets informing my participants that their filled in feedback sheets could possibly be used for research purposes. Lastly, in order to ensure confirmability, I again set up regular meetings with my supervisor, where I discussed and analysed the data that I had, in the form of feedback sheets previously received by my company, *Psychology at Work*. I also worked closely with a research assistant, who de-identified all the feedback sheets and helped me to be aware of my subjectivities. All information was de-identified in order to mitigate the POPIA risk. Furthermore, I was aware that I could not own other people's personal opinions, even if I gathered the feedback forms and had them in my possession. This point will be further elaborated on in my thesis in the section titled "Potential conflict of Interest and how to mitigate this". Despite having to analyse what my participants said on the feedback sheets. I consistently practiced reflexivity in order to take in to consideration my own biases in order to ensure the overall credibility of this study (Dürr, 2020).

3.8 Self-reflexivity

As explained in the introduction chapter of my thesis, the onset of the Corona Virus caused many challenges for my company, *Psychology at Work*, as our main source of income was usually garnered through face-to-face workshops. However, suddenly, I was faced with an entire year of training being cancelled due to the fact that training venues were closed for business, flights not really possible and client companies unwilling to host training. Although we initially hoped that the first three weeks of lockdown would be all, my clients typically cancelled everything until further notice. In an attempt to continue procuring income, I joined the massive migration to synchronous online learning platforms. Given the sudden, forced uptake of these online learning platforms, most hesitations or previous complaints about computer-based learning seemed to fall by the wayside. Earning an income remotely seemed far more important than these previous concerns about online learning possibly not being as engaging as face-to-face learning. In the midst of this I facilitated the same Interpersonal Intelligence workshop in its new format and received feedback from participants after each workshop. Given that we are at this moment (November 2021) still dealing with waves of Coronavirus, and some corporates are still predominantly working remotely, I believed it was very important to delve into the unique set of circumstances and unique context that working remotely in South Africa presents.

In my own workshop I used online tools when we first moved on to doing the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop online. Zayapragassarazan (2020) explains that using tools on online platforms such as Zoom can be very useful, as there are numerous tools available such as splitting into different rooms where students can break apart and do group projects and the

teacher can check in to the rooms. This encouraged the participants on the workshop to listen and engage as they became aware that every now and then they would be asked to fill in simple answers based on some of the topics we had already discussed. This is very similar to what Zayapragassarazan (2020) suggested would increase learner engagement.

I am a middle-aged (47 years old), white female South African business owner. I facilitated these Interpersonal Intelligence workshops myself, to mixed race, age and gender groups of corporate employees. The participants of the workshops then filled in feedback sheets (see Appendix A) sharing their experiences, and offering feedback. The fact that some of the participants differed from myself in terms of race, gender, and age could have impacted on their experience of the workshop as well as on their feedback. The fact that I am white, potentially older, and culturally similar to the previous apartheid oppressive regime could also have impacted participants' experience of the workshop, and hence their feedback. The participants on my workshop may have felt that since I did not come from a historically disadvantaged background, I may not have had an adequate understanding of their current and/or past experiences of being disadvantaged. This could also have affected my ability to establish rapport with some participants. The fact that English is my first language, and for some participants their second language, could also have affected some participants' experiences on the workshop. I made use of active listening skills, empathy and humour during the workshops to potentially help mitigate cultural, age, and language barriers. The participant experiences on the workshop were carefully unpacked and I was aware of my background and bias of privilege while facilitating.

I have a vested interest in my research topic given that the feedback sheets being analysed are about my own work and the workshop I designed. Besides keeping myself accountable and allowing the research to unfold, I also relied on my supervisor, an editing process, as well as a research assistant to check bias. My research assistant had recently completed her Master's thesis in Sociology and is well versed in personal reflexivity and takes a similar view to myself that qualitative research is a process whereby research subjectivity is appreciated as a resource in itself. We also have a robust and assertive relationship whereby she feels comfortable pointing out criticism and potential risk. Despite the cultural, language, age, gender and historical differences, I do believe that the feedback obtained can be valuable to compare participants' experiences of the online vs face-to-face experiences of the workshop.

In terms of my reflexivity with regard to the analysis section of my thesis, I needed to own that I had a difficult time. While I had decided to follow Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines for thematic analysis, my initial attempt was fraught, needing to structure too much personally from the onset. I rushed the process and literally almost ticked every box on the list of what not to do when doing a thematic analysis. My natural preference of thinking in a highly structured manner led me straight to wanting to quantify and report on frequencies. As a result, I ended up with more of a quantitative content analysis. My supervisor, Dr Kafaar, recommended I re-read Braun and Clarke (2006) carefully and follow the steps more pedantically, so as not to impose structure and theories on the data from early on, rather generating the themes from the codes themselves. My second attempt at following the Braun and Clarke (2006) guidelines allowed for a much better result, with themes arising themselves, and even with some surprises. I delved much deeper into

the data the second time I did the coding, utilising far more thoughtfulness and reflection, as Braun and Clark (2019) mention in their more recent article.

3.9 Ethical considerations

This study was approached with the greatest attention to ethical requirements. I felt that this research was ethically vital to do as our world has changed and adapted dramatically since the outbreak of the Coronavirus. My hope was that this thesis will help to understand virtual (online) facilitation as an option to keeping people connected as well as companies afloat. I also hoped to further understand the differences between how each delivery method is experienced.

Each participant that filled in the feedback sheet remained completely anonymous, no name appearing on the feedback sheets being analysed, and the business/institution remaining anonymous with no identifying information as all the information was de-identified by my research assistant upon receiving the feedback sheet via email. I was unable to tell which feedback sheet belonged to which individual or organisation. This also mitigated a POPIA risk.

The results of my research did not place any individual, family or community at social, psychological, legal or economic risk of harm due to the fact that the individuals and companies were de-identified and anonymised. It would be nearly impossible for anyone to work out which individual filled in the feedback or which company they belong to. Even if the information was identifiable none of the information would place any individual, family or community at social, psychological, legal or economic risk of harm due to the fact that the questions that appear on the

feedback sheet are based on opinions of how each individual experienced the workshop (online or Face-to-Face) and my facilitation style. The following questions appear on my feedback sheet:

- Did you find this a valuable learning/growing experience?
- What did you learn about behaviour types in a way that could assist you in understanding the behaviour of other people?
- What did you learn about conflict management and resolution?
- What did you learn about giving and receiving critical feedback?
- What specifically about the facilitation style can be improved upon?
- What did you not like about the workshop and how could it be improved?
- Would you recommend this workshop to others?

I have taken paramount care to go through the necessary ethical processes thoroughly (REC and DESC applications). My REC approval number is 22186 (see Appendix B). I was meticulous in gathering all the necessary documents needed to gain permission to conduct this study.

The feedback sheets used as data for my thesis were stored in such a manner that it was not identifiable, as there was no identifiable information on the files. Furthermore, my computer, as well as the electronic file itself, was protected by a password at all times. In addition to this a backup of the data was stored on the password-protected Stellenbosch University OneDrive.

3.9.1 Potential conflict of interest and being aware of my subjectivities

I was aware that I cannot own other people's personal opinions, even if I gathered the feedback forms and had them in my possession, as the feedback sheets are emailed back to my assistant. Firstly, in terms of a potential conflict of interest, any identifiable information on the feedback sheets were de-identified by my research assistant before I started the thematic analysis for my thesis. This was done so that an individual's opinions could not be linked to any one person or a specific online or face-to-face group. The questions on the feedback sheets were related to what the individuals learned on the workshop as well as what could be improved on with regard to my facilitation style. Therefore, nothing on the feedback sheet would be able to link any person or organisation to the feedback. I was aware that there could be a potential conflict of interest in my research given the fact that I am both the sole owner of *Psychology at Work* (there are no other directors) as well as the researcher. A potential conflict of interest could have arose due to the fact that I am a single-owner business where my (the researcher) livelihood is potentially dependent on a certain model (the online model), and negative feedback could potentially have a negative effect on my business. In addition, and in an attempt to be more reflexive, while negative feedback about online delivery may have meant that such a practice should be limited, I was also aware that during the COVID pandemic, companies may still have been forced to make this their only option. I also watched my own internal subjectivities as a facilitator of the course as I had initially been quite against doing online workshops or courses due to issues of a lack of engagement. Thus, I was aware that this research was of great importance to me personally, to my business and to my clients. We as humans are subjective beings and since my research is purely qualitative (using thematic analysis to analyse my data), the above points are my subjectivities which I took into account

during my analysis. I acknowledged and kept in the back of my mind that these are my subjectivities and I constantly reflected back on these throughout the analysis process. I was also aware of what most subjectivities were, and I acknowledged them.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter explored the research procedure as well as the ethical considerations and the potential conflict of interest risk pertaining to my study. The study is qualitative in nature, and I employed a constructionist epistemology. Through this I analysed my data using a theoretical thematic analysis. The ethics section was included to show that great care was taken to ensure that the participants and companies who filled in the feedback sheets remained anonymous. The self-reflexivity section emphasised the fact that I am a subjective being and I had to be aware of these.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter entails an analysis of the data obtained through the feedback sheets emailed to my assistant at the end of every workshop. The analysis of the data falls under five main themes that helped us understand the differences and similarities between feedback from those who experienced a synchronous online based workshop versus those who had experienced the same workshop in a face-to-face delivery method. Through the data analysis there were five themes that emerged, namely: “The Link Between Perceived Value and Impact”, “The Effect of an Informal Light-Hearted Learning Environment”, “Engagement Always Wins”, “Gratefulness for Personal Growth” and “Experienced Irritations”. The above themes in turn revealed a host of subthemes that emerged when I was busy coding my data. A summary of main themes and subthemes are presented in Table 4.1 below. In addition to me analysing the themes and subthemes, my data are further discussed in terms of the face-to-face workshop and then the online workshop, in order to allow for a decent comparison to take place in terms of the impact of each format and possible similarities and differences.

4.2 The organisations

The feedback sheets were gathered from the period 2018 to the present, with some of the workshops being conducted in a face-to-face format and some of them conducted in an online format. The feedback sheets are from a total of seven different companies across South Africa. In terms of the participants’ names as well as their specific organisations, these details have been de-

identified by my research assistant in order to protect the participants' identity and client companies' confidentiality. The participants themselves in this study are adults (male and female) in a corporate work environment in South Africa. They are nominated by the various companies' Human Resources and leadership structures. The following is a description of each organisation where I held the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop (either in an online or a face-to-face format):

Organisation 1: Is a large banking institution with Head Quarters in Gauteng. They nominated supervisory and middle management candidates. This is a stable organisation, not inclined to initiate too much change, where restructuring does not typically result in job loss. I would describe the culture of this organisation as quite traditional.

Organisation 2: Is a large pharmacy and beauty retail chain based across South Africa, with Head Quarters based in the Western Cape. They nominated both supervisory as well as middle management candidates. This organisation has a typically top-down culture, with high levels of stress and regularly threatened job loss.

Organisation 3: Is a large clothing retail group which is based around South Africa with Head Quarters in the Western Cape. They nominated both supervisory as well as middle management candidates. This is a stable organisation where the culture is quite people orientated and where restructuring seldom takes place. Performance management and potential job loss seldom feature.

Organisation 4: Is one of the oldest wine farms in the country located in the Western Cape. They nominated individuals at the middle management level as well as at an executive level. This is an

organisation battling with large scale change and restructuring at middle management and executive levels seems continuous.

Organisation 5: Is a company that specialises in financial services whose Head Quarters is in the Western Cape. Candidates were nominated from operator level all the way through to senior management. This organisation's culture comes across as more flexible than traditional and more resilient than stressed.

Organisation 6: This organisation provides specialised services within other organisations, concentrating on broad financial services, computer related services, development within one's business as well as marketing and Human resources. This organisation is also located around South Africa. They nominated candidates from middle to senior management. The culture of this organisation comes across as political and lacking in transparency. Different teams within this organisation have very different cultures from one another.

Organisation 7: Is a motor vehicle manufacturing company with Head Quarters in Kariega. Candidates nominate themselves and can be from an operator level right through to a senior management level. This organisation has a very traditional top-down culture with operational levels finding it difficult to question management structures.

4.3 Themes

This study attempted to look at the differences and similarities between feedback from participants who have experienced a cognitive behavioural workshop online and other participants who experienced the same workshop facilitated face-to-face. In an attempt to investigate these

differences and in answer to my research questions, the data is expressed under five main themes. These themes organically came into being through an iterative coding process. In addition, there are further subthemes which have been identified in the data through a similar process to the main themes. Both the five higher order main themes and the additional subthemes are represented in Table 4.1 below. I explain at a deeper level and illustrate themes further in the following section through the use of examples and the course participants' own words as given on the feedback sheets.

Table 4.1

Themes and Subthemes

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Subtheme</u>	
	Face-to-Face	Online
4.3.1 The Link Between Perceived Value and Impact	a) Eye-opening b) The Crucial Impact on Both Work and Home Life	c) Eye-opening a) The Crucial Impact on Both Work and Home Life
4.3.2 The Effect of an Informal Light-Hearted Learning Environment	a) Creating Safe Spaces b) Using Everyday Examples to Make Memories	a) Creating Safe Spaces b) Using Everyday Examples to Make Memories
4.3.3 Engagement Always Wins	a) Importance of Humour and Naughtiness During Training	a) Importance of Humour and Naughtiness During Training

	b) Relevance of Role-Play in Cementing New Thoughts	b) Relevance of Role-Play in Cementing New Thoughts
	c) In Your Face Examples	c) In Your Face Examples
4.3.4 Gratefulness for Personal Growth		
4.3.5 Experienced Irritations	a) The Draining Element of Group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy	a) The Draining Element of Group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
		b) Connectivity Issues Experienced
		c) Body language: The Missing link
		d) “Even Though”

While I was going through step one of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six step process for writing and conducting a thematic analysis, titled “Familiarizing yourself with your data” (p. 87), I was familiarising myself with the data and I noted that each and every participant said that they both enjoyed the workshop and would recommend the workshop to others. Whilst I am fully aware that this was not part of my thematic analysis as it was not coded, I still felt that it was important to discuss this section of the feedback sheets as it is important for context.

To further explain this context, the answers received arose from answering question one on the feedback sheet which asked, *Did you find this a valuable learning/growing (please comment?)* and answering question seven on the feedback sheet which asked the question, *Would you recommend this workshop to others?* So overall, it was evident that the backdrop to the emerging themes was

one of every participant enjoying and finding value in the workshop. The themes will of course delve much deeper into the individuals' experiences, providing more detailed and insightful reasons as to why there was this enjoyment and value add.

For the purposes of this entire analysis section, I split up the themes into those who attended the online workshop versus those who attended the face-to-face workshop.

Many of the responses indicated that the participants on this workshop did in fact find both face-to-face and online workshops helpful, insightful, valuable and informative. This was similar to findings from Cavanaugh and Jacquemin (2015), who argued that very little difference is seen between the level of course enjoyment as well as completion rates in an online format or a face-to-face format. Cavanaugh and Jacquemin (2015) argued that the reason why there is very little difference seen between the level of course enjoyment as well as course completion rates for both the online and face-to-face format, is due to the fact that there has been a substantial increase in the number of enrolments onto online courses. Cavanaugh and Jacquemin (2015) found that facilitators, lecturers and teachers view online and face-to-face formats as equally constructive when giving instructions to students or course participants. In the study by Cavanaugh and Jacquemin (2015), they examined the type of course as well as students' grade-based results and they found that participants or students with higher grade-based results perform better in online classes or courses, whereas students who struggled academically or had poor grade-based results, tended to struggle in online courses compared to face-to-face courses. In the past many institutions were under the impression that online learning was not experienced as effective as face-to-face learning, however, over the last decade, many academics actually rated online learning at least as

experienced as effective, or even more effective, than face-to-face learning (Cavanaugh & Jacquemin).

4.3.1 Theme 1: The Link between Perceived Value and Impact

The first theme generated from the data was titled, “The Link Between Perceived Value and Impact”. The perceived value of the overall course had a direct link to the overall impact of the workshop. This theme centred around participants experiencing value, because the course content was experienced as important, and likely to impact their behaviour. The course content seemed to come across as new, fresh and crucial which allowed them to feel that they had derived benefit from attending the workshop. The participants seemed very willing to ascribe value and benefit to new information that was likely to have an impact on their daily functioning. The first subtheme, “Eye-Opening”, focused on the value add experienced because information is new, fresh, insightful and interesting. Whereas the second subtheme, “The Crucial Impact on Both Work and Home Life”, focused on the value add experienced because the training affects more than just one facet of themselves. The workshop was therefore perceived as impacting both of the main spheres of life that some adults find themselves in; work and home life. The participants’ experience of value can be seen from the following extracts from both the face-to-face as well as the online formats:

*Absolutely, the training was very valuable. **Online participant 1***

*The training was very informative and value adding. **Face-to-face participant 1***

*This was a very valuable programme with very practical skills. **Face-to-face participant 5***

Eye-Opening

The first subtheme to fall under the main subtheme of “Link between Perceived Value and Impact” was “Eye-Opening”. Many participants spoke about the workshop and their learnings as being “eye-opening”. What counted as eye-opening for me throughout the coding process was when the workshop participants used words such as “vital”, “crucial”, “essential”, “important”, “informative”, “insightful;”, “interesting” and “benefit”. The following excerpts are from the face-to-face feedback sheets:

*What an amazing eye opener. I learnt so much about myself on a personal level and in the work place. **Face-to-face participant 6***

*The exposure to the behavioural types was an enlightenment opportunity which opened one’s eyes to some of these that typically play out around us...both in the work and personal realms. **Face-to-face participant 32***

*It was a great experience that took me to the next level in my life. It was like my eyes were opened for the very first time. **Face-to-face participant 37***

Just as the workshop was eye-opening on the face-to-face format, the following excerpts are from the online feedback sheets that I received from the participants:

*There was nothing I didn't like. It was relevant, insightful and informative. **Online participant 1***

*The training was informative because I learned about the different types of behaviour. **Online participant 2***

*Yes, it was truly an eye opener and could relate it to personal life as well as work life. **Online participant 11***

*The training was informative. **Online participant 2***

*The training was very insightful. **Online participant 8***

In agreement with Finn (1989), the above examples illustrate that perceived value in the course content related to the overall impact that course participants experienced in terms of buying into and absorbing new information. It is evident that the participants clearly bought into the workshop as they revealed that the workshop was appreciated and eye-opening in many ways. In addition, they gained information that they had not been given access to before, so the information was perceived as fresh and “eye-opening”. There was little difference between the experiences of the face-to-face and online formats in this regard.

The Crucial Impact on both Work and Home Life

Authors such as Bennet-Levy and Lee (2014) explain that using Cognitive Behavioural Theory in a group setting works because one dives deep into one’s emotions and often re-lives past experiences. These past experiences could take place in both a home and a work context. Cognitive Behavioural Theory therefore helps people shift behaviour in a way that can be beneficial in one’s home life as well as work life. This was evident as many of the workshop participants spoke about the workshop, which uses Cognitive Behavioural theory, as being beneficial for both their work and home life. In terms of the face-to-face workshop, the following excerpts are examples of face-to-face participants mentioning the relevance of the focus of the workshop being on both professional/work environment and personal/home life:

*[The workshop is] Valuable in various ways – self and team. Reflection, tools to improve and understanding of pitfalls. **Face-to-face participant 7***

*I learnt so much about myself on a personal level and in the work place. **Face-to-face participant 8***

*Excellent course – such useful and beneficial tips that can be used at the workplace and personal space. I loved this topic – this can be used at home and at work. Circle steps are a great tool to employ when resolving conflict, to ensure it is a win-win outcome without any stored resentment. **Face-to-face participant 13***

*Very useful in terms of being able to apply to life in general. **Face-to-face participant 23***

*The programme outline has aspects that I can practically use in every sphere of my life. **Face-to-face participant 30***

*The exposure to the behavioural types was an enlightenment opportunity which opened one's eyes to some of these that typically play out around us...both in the work and personal realms. **Face-to-face participant 32***

For me, I felt like both my professional and personal lives have taken a turn for the better.

Face-to-face participant 36

*It was a great experience that took me to the next level in your life. It was like my eyes were opened for the very first time. **Face-to-face participant 37***

*Yes, most definitely. Not just in my career, but a lot learned, new things that I can and will apply in my personal Life. I have definitely learned a lot of things that I will now apply at work, but I have also learned things that I will apply in my personal life. **Face-to-face participant 43***

*I've applied the circle steps in my professional and personal life with great results. Situations at work that I thought were hopeless have actually become hopeful again. **Face-to-face participant 44***

*This training is very informative and can be used in my personal and work space. **Face-to-face participant 58***

The following excerpts are examples of online participants mentioning the relevance of the focus of the workshop being on both professional/work environment and personal/home life environments:

*I have learnt invaluable lessons that will certainly be carried through not only my work place life but also in my overall life. **Online participant 3***

*What I liked mostly was I will be able to use what I have learnt at work and at home. **Online participant 8***

*It [the workshop] was truly an eye opener and could relate it to personal life as well as work life. Very valuable learning. **Online participant 11***

*I absolutely loved this workshop & I am so grateful for this experience which will benefit my personal & professional life. **Online participant 16***

*This learning can and has had an influence on my home and work environment. **Online participant 19***

*I developed a better understanding of my behaviour, and also how to manage difficult relationships whether it be at work or home. **Online participant 20***

*This training has helped me grow tremendously not only in my career but as well in my personal life. **Online participant 31***

It is evident from the excerpts above that the course impacted the participants positively in a personal life and work life capacity. This is in line with what Bennet-Levy and Lee (2014) had to say with regard to group CBT. During the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop, it was discovered that no matter how much the participants resisted opening up, indeed, whether they verbalised their experiences or processed internally, the personal lives (work and home) of many participants became a key aspect in the process of learning, which is what Bennet-Levy and Lee (2014) argued. When one compares the comments from both the face-to-face and online formats this experience of benefitting from the focus on both home and work life seems similar.

4.3.2 Theme 2: The Effect of an Informal Learning Environment

Griffiths and García Peñalvo (2016) argue that although school learning systems are on the rise all over the world, there are still many other factors that lead to successful learning and therefore a promising future career. This includes aspects that cannot be taught in a classroom setting but

rather through informal learning that comes from the home space and socialising with peers (Griffiths & García Peñalvo, 2016). This has lead Griffiths and García Peñalvo (2016) to believe that informal ways of learning should be utilised in order to bolster and increase the overall efficiency of teaching or facilitating in order to cement new learnings in students and course participants. This is very similar to the approach I employ when facilitating my workshops and transferring knowledge to workshop participants. As can be seen in the subthemes below, I created an informal learning environment so as to create a safe space for my workshop participants in order for them to absorb new knowledge in a calm environment. Secondly, I made sure to include real examples from my own personal life and encourage the course participants to share their real examples, as it creates a mutually supportive environment that is optimal for absorbing new information (Roorda et al., 2017). The following two subthemes were generated under this theme, namely “Creating Safe Spaces” and “Using Everyday Examples to Make Memories”.

Creating Safe Spaces

Whilst coding my data it became increasingly clear that participants absorbed more information when I created a safe space for them to voice their opinions and concerns. Thomas and Allen (2021) argued that informal behaviour shown by facilitators, which includes warmth, affection and enjoyment, encourages a close and caring relationship which is motivating and fosters a learning environment which encourages trust and collaboration. It is clear from what the course participants answered on their feedback sheets that they felt that there was a safe space created for them to learn and express their concerns with regard to changing unhelpful behaviour.

With regard to the face-to-face workshop, the participants spoke about feeling safe as the facilitator created a safe space for them. The excerpts below illustrate this:

*Loved each and every one moment especially learning more about myself and leaning that it's okay cause at the end of the day we all human and we all have our own baggage. **Face-to-face participant 8***

*Justine created a safe environment for the team to discuss issues amongst ourselves. **Face-to-face participant 9***

*I was more than comfortable with the facilitation style, it left me at ease & made it easier for me to share. **Face-to-face participant 15***

*Thanks to Justine that allowed us to express our different and diverse worlds. **Face-to-face participant 16***

*If I was able to get out of my comfort zone and interact openly, then mission accomplished. **Face-to-face participant 21***

*She presents it in a 'safe' non-threatening, fun and humorous way, so it doesn't feel scary or 'heavy' and you don't feel resistance to it, because it being about hard or 'untouchable' subjects. **Face-to-face participant 26***

*I loved that Justine made me feel comfortable from the moment that we met. Considering that we are dealing with our own little demons that we do not necessarily want to face, the entire programme was dealt with in such a way that it made it very interesting, engaging and fun. **Face-to-face participant 30***

The following excerpts are from the online workshop with regard to creating safe spaces on the workshop:

*The light heartedness of the sessions is what kept me engaged at all times. **Online participant 21***

*Justine was really engaging, because her personality is very friendly and relaxed so it almost feels like she is right in front of you when she is doing it, she isn't distant and she is informal so it is still a very friendly environment even though it is all online. **Online participant 24***

Roorda et al. (2017) argues that learners perform optimally and absorb the most knowledge when they experience feelings of safety or are around educators who make them feel safe and heard. It is evident from the above examples that I was able to create a safe space for my workshop participants to learn. When comparing the quality and the experiences of the comments creating safe spaces between the face-to-face group and the online groups, the more powerful commentary around creating safe spaces seemed to come from the face-to-face group. It seems as though a safe space experience is more common and more easily experienced when in a traditional classroom setting, as opposed to a virtual one. The relevance of safe space and utilisation of such phrasing may either be compromised because the participants actually felt less safe or perhaps due to the fact that they were in the safest place already, i.e., their home, might have had an influence. Whether this influence affected word choice or actual experience is unknown. This could be a potential area for further research.

Using Everyday Examples to make Memories

Another way that an informal learning environment is created is by typically using every day, real examples. I also create a space where course participants can give me their personal examples and I use this as a real example to further elaborate on a theory or section of work during the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop. By including real examples from my own personal life as well as allowing the course participants to share their real examples, it also creates an environment where the facilitator expresses an interest in each workshop participant individually and this

therefore fosters a supportive, informal learning environment (Roorda et al., 2017). The following excerpts are what the face-to-face participants had to say on the feedback sheet with regard to using real examples on the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop:

*Justine provides real life examples that one can relate to. **Face-to-face participant 10***

*I was more than comfortable with the facilitation style, it left me at ease & made it easier for me to share. I liked how we used real life (personal/work) scenarios to apply. **Face-to-face participant 15***

*I enjoyed the fact that the examples and exercises were real life examples and the problems were applied to real-life situations at work – I don't think there is anything that really needs improvement – the simple flipchart style of presenting and facilitating keeps it more real and personal. **Face-to-face participant 45***

*Thanks, Justine, for making the course engaging and using real life examples to illustrate the learnings. It helps to remember much more versus us listening to only theory. I look forward to practicing and enhancing my skills learnt from these sessions. **Face-to-face participant 53***

The following excerpts were found in the online workshop feedback sheets with regard to the subtheme “Using Everyday Examples to Make Memories”:

*I was happy with the training method used as well as the applied demonstrations of different behaviour. **Online participant 2***

*She was always keeping her audience informed and giving good examples of what is explained. **Online participant 9***

When I compare the quality of the comments used in both delivery formats of the workshop, it seems there was an equal amount of appreciation for using everyday examples. According to Crosling et al. (2008), there has been much agreement on the topic of using real life examples as a method to help with academic success and in turn allows for new learning to be cemented in one’s memory. This is very similar to how I use practical, real-life examples in the workshop, which aids the workshop participants in terms of absorbing new information. I do this in order that, instead of my workshop participants simply learning a theory, they can think back to personal, everyday examples that they then applied to the theory in order to remember it. I do this to cement learning, which many of the participants picked up on and mentioned on their feedback sheet, illustrated by the following excerpt:

*Thanks Justine for making the course engaging and using real life examples to illustrate the learnings. It helps to remember much more versus us listening to only theory. I look forward to practicing and enhancing my skills learnt from these sessions. **Face-to-face participant 5***

4.3.3 Theme 3: Engagement Always Wins

Whilst doing research in order to furnish my literature review, it quickly became apparent that the word “engagement” was something that could not be ignored with regard to online learning as well as face-to-face learning, as it was discussed in almost every article that I read relating to my chosen topic. Lei et al. (2018) explained that engagement is when participants are connected and actively involved with their course content as well as with their course facilitator.

Student engagement refers to the active participation of students, which has a positive connection to learner outcomes (Lei et al., 2018). Student engagement is vitally important regardless of the delivery method as facilitating a student’s increased engagement increases their overall chance of implementation as well as a higher level of knowledge retention (May, 2019). Roorda et al. (2017) states that an individual’s level of engagement increases dramatically when their basic psychological need to be related to and treated as an autonomous person are met. Roorda et al. (2017) further argued that facilitators who show involvement and express interest in each individual separately allow for this type of engagement to be increased. The facilitation technique used on this workshop to specifically focus on each individual’s home and work environment was designed to increase the individual feeling related to and was designed to hopefully increase their level of feeling like an autonomous, separate, unique person. So, during the workshop, each individual participant is asked questions to gain this information so that each participant has the choice and opportunity to differentiate themselves and therefore increase their feelings of autonomy. Therefore, I conclude that the technique of using home and work examples is likely to increase engagement, as suggested by Roorda et al. (2017), in both the online as well as the face-

to-face format. Similar to what is argued by Chiu (2021), Dracup (2012), Roorda et al. (2017) and May (2019), engagement plays a large role and features highly in comments from participants in this study.

A few subthemes were raised under the theme “engagement” whilst analysing the de-identified feedback sheets. There are numerous ways to keep course participants actively engaged during the duration of the course, however the following is a list of subthemes that the course participants pointed out themselves with regard to keeping them engaged during the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop: “Humour and Role-Play”. The following excerpts are examples of what the face-to-face course participants had to say with regard to their overall experiences of engagement on the online Interpersonal Intelligence workshop:

*Mostly I found it really excellent, and I could really see the huge value of the humour coupled with the level of engagement and connection with people. **Face-to-face participant***

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*Nothing, Justine was absolutely awesome. We were engaged the whole time. **Face-to-face participant 22***

*Everyone was completely engaged in all the activities; I don't think the facilitation style can be improved. **Face-to-face participant 22***

*Considering that we are dealing with our own little demons that we do not necessarily want to face, the entire programme was dealt with in such a way that it made it very interesting, engaging and fun. **Face-to-face participant 30***

*The presentation skills and methods of engaging were excellent **Face-to-face participant 46***

The following excerpts are examples of what the online course participants had to say with regard to their overall experiences of engagement on the online Interpersonal Intelligence workshop:

*I commend Justine for engaging the audience and keeping the sessions “alive”. **Online participant 3***

*The facilitation style was very good, Justine was great I really enjoyed her as a person and I enjoyed the way she presented the workshop. **Online participant 4***

*Justine is absolutely great at her job with an amazing way of engaging with people. **Online participant 10***

*It was perfectly executed and fun whilst being very informative. **Online participant 11***

*She is genuine and passionate about her subject matter and I thoroughly enjoyed every minute engaging with her. **Online participant 16***

*She connected with us as if we are not doing visual class and I enjoyed the training method used. **Online participant 30***

*NOTHING!!!! I was very impressed with how she has kept us engaged even while doing this training online.....absolutely amazing. **Online participant 31***

*[I] was worried about the lack of connectivity between us and the facilitator but it was perfect. **Online participant 35***

*Facilitation style was very engaging and excellent, will not change a thing. **Online participant 38***

The following responses were given in answer to the question on the feedback sheet, *Any other comments?:*

*Justine kept us focused and engaged on the subject matter and I did not miss even a word because she was very interesting. **Online participant 1***

*This is honestly the most fascinating and engaging programme I have ever been on. **Online participant 15***

*Nothing from my side. We had more than enough breaks in between and always engaged. **Online participant 9***

In a study done by Dhawan (2020), he found that learners tended to view online learning as “boring and unengaging” (p. 8). One of my biggest worries in terms of moving my workshop from a face-to-face learning environment to an online learning environment was how I was going to keep engagement levels up between participants as well as myself. However, from the examples above it is evident that the course participants did in fact find the online workshop engaging, with some course participants calling the workshop interesting, fascinating and even “perfectly executed”. Dhawan (2020) further explained that often online learning content can be too theoretical and not

practical enough, this in turn does not allow learners to practice what they have learnt and for the theory to be imbedded in their minds. The following examples are how I mitigated this risk and made sure that there was enough engagement to help the online course participants retain the information they learn on the workshop:

This was one of the best trainings I received. She was always keeping her audience informed and giving good examples of what is explained. Awesome training Justine.

Online participant 9

*The engagement was great, very interactive I have no suggestions I thoroughly enjoyed the sessions. **Online participant 20***

*The light heartedness of the sessions is what kept me engaged at all times. **Online participant 21***

*We were all given an opportunity to participate. **Online participant 22***

*The fact that you made everyone interact I love that this way everyone can get to see where the problem areas are. **Online participant 34***

I can safely conclude that whether workshops are online or face-to-face, engagement remains critical to both the perceived experienced effectiveness and the reported enjoyment. This is true of both formats of the workshop, and indeed, as my themes suggest, “engagement always wins”.

The Importance of Humour and Naughtiness

Humour is one of the most important techniques I employ in order to keep the participants fully engaged, due to the fact that if we are laughing and enjoying the course our bodies are producing oxytocin and the information is more likely to go in and stay embedded in the minds of the workshop participants (Delizonna, 2017). The following excerpts include the answers on the face-to-face feedback sheets that relate to the subtheme “The Importance of Humour and Naughtiness During Training” under the overriding “Engagement” theme:

*I could really see the huge value of the humour coupled with the level of engagement and connection with people... I did find your talent for this quite exceptional, and although it was tough, it was not at all boring or irrelevant. **Face-to-face participant 7***

*Loved the facilitator’s energy and the humour. What a great course!! **Face-to-face participant 13***

*Adds humour in her facilitation which worked quite well because the last 2 days of the course were quite intense for me. **Face-to-face participant 18***

*You are not an ordinary facilitator – you are unique and extraordinary. The naughtiness, quirky, Fu%K and Sh%T stuff is that secret inner-me of every person that sometimes just wants to come out... And it makes the oxytocin flowing baby!! Your style is contagious. **Face-to-face participant 19***

*Facilitation style very good, keep on with it as is. The humour makes situation bearable and relaxed. **Face-to-face participant 39***

*The humorous, relaxed, open style is perfect for dealing with difficult topics such as conflict. **Face-to-face participant 40***

*I felt like I learned and practiced the new skills and had a laugh doing so. **Face-to-face participant 47***

*The light heartedness and humour adds to the positive attitude and participation of the group. Very captivating. **Face-to-face participant 49***

*I loved everything, down to Justine's "naughty by nature" approach to every situation. **Face-to-face participant 59***

*The interaction, the banter, the jokes – made our team a lot stronger in terms of being able to bond. **Face-to-face participant 70***

The following excerpts are what the online workshop participants had to say about humour, sometimes even slightly inappropriate humour:

*Justine is humorous and personable. **Online participant 13***

*Justine is authentic and passionate about her subject. She injected huge amounts of humour into the workshop which makes the workshop not only interesting and helpful, but really fun as well, her humour kept us super engaged as a group. **Online participant 15***

*Justine kept us hooked through naughty humour... **Online participant 21***

*Justine was very funny. **Online participant 32***

Dhawan (2020) argued that “efforts should be made to humanize the learning process to the best extent possible” (p. 9). I tried to humanise the whole Interpersonal Intelligence workshop as much as I possibly could. I did this by including humour, live examples, and role-play throughout the online and face-to-face workshop. One of the simplest yet most effective forms of getting one’s course participants to engage is through the use of humour (May, 2019). One of the other reasons using humour is valuable in training sessions, and in agreement with what Delizonna (2017) argued, is that it allows for a relinquishing of judgement, interpersonal connection and a feeling of safety, thanks to the release of oxytocin. There seemed to be no difference to the mention of the use of humour and the experienced effectiveness thereof, no matter which format was used during training.

The Relevance of Role-Play in Cementing New Thoughts

The subtheme of role-play also emerged under the theme of “Engagement”. Dracup (2012) argues that role-play is a vital aspect of keeping course participants engaged as it allows their brains to act out real life examples in order to help resolve conflict situations. I make sure that each course participant has an individual chance to role-play a scenario that they feel they need help with. I do this in order to allow participants to feel actively involved in the workshop and to give a chance to those course participants who would not normally want to get as actively involved in the workshop as others. This also allows for those participants who are usually quieter, less initiating or introverted to get some “airtime”. The following excerpts are what the face-to-face participants had to say about role-play and how it helped them to cement their learnings on the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop:

*Because it was real issues that we could relate to and actually performed, you can never forget it. **Face-to-face participant 3***

*I enjoyed how each day I was taken out of my safe place through the use of role-play and just went for it, I loved loved how Justine facilitated the workshop. **Face-to-face participant 8***

*The facilitator was great, the interaction with the team brought much more understanding to the programme. **Face-to-face participant 16***

*The roll-play examples were very well done and relevant to the Course. **Face-to-face participant 29***

*I really enjoyed the practical examples and the method of teaching. **Face-to-face participant 40***

*The practice sessions was really great and different as traditionally most training has been very training based and when you get back into the work environment, it is not easy to do. The practice broke the initial fears and made it much easier to integrate into the work and life environment. **Face-to-face participant 58***

*I enjoyed the course thoroughly. It didn't feel like a silly exercise forced onto me from the powers that be. It is the perfect cocktail of personal discovery mixed with "this is what you should be doing". **Face-to-face participant 59***

The following excerpts are what the online participants had to say about role-play and how it helped them to cement their learnings on the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop:

*It provided an overall sense of good practices that we could all practice in our daily interactions. **Online participant 3***

*Justine kept us hooked through naughty humour and insightful role-plays yet her professionalism was never compromised. **Online participant 21***

*I enjoyed the programme, the time was just right. We had enough time to test understanding by doing role-plays. **Online participant 27***

When adapting my workshop to the online platform, one of my concerns was around getting the role-plays to be experienced as effective. I made use of my assistant during the online version so as to maximise the chance that participants could see the interaction live, could easily see the body language and experience interaction as unfiltered as possible. When reviewing these comments, it appeared as though both formats seemed to make adequate use of the utilisation of role-plays.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Gratefulness for Personal Growth

Through the reading and rereading of my data it became evident that the participants enjoyed the workshop and found it to be life-changing. Many of the workshop participants explicitly spoke about feeling “grateful” and “appreciative”, especially in terms of the participants’ experience of the value of personal growth. Through the coding process and picking up on words such as “grateful” and “growth”, it became increasingly clear that there was a theme in the data which related to reasons why my workshop participants would recommend the workshop to others.

The following extracts from the data show how the participants experienced feeling grateful for the positive growth and changes that occurred in their lives from attending the face-to-face Interpersonal Intelligence workshop:

*I learned volumes about myself and what others thought of me. I also learned how to address difficult situations diplomatically, without fear. **Face-to-face participant 6***

*I found it very much of a growth experience as it enhanced my interpersonal skills. **Face-to-face participant 17***

*Justine was an awesome facilitator, it’s by far the most engaging and personal growth session I have attended. **Face-to-face participant 26***

*...a thought-provoking journey, filled with self-discoveries along the way. **Face-to-face participant 32***

*I enjoyed the programme and learned a lot about myself and the way I see the world. Many things are so different around me all because of the benefits from the programme. **Face-to-face participant 37***

*It gave me more insight in my own personal “issues” and made me aware of aspects in others that I did not expect. **Face-to-face participant 39***

*I learnt a lot about myself, I learnt how familiar strangers perceive me, and I learnt how to deal with difficult situations within the work place. **Face-to-face participant 59***

*I have been on a lot of courses in my career, this is by far the best course I have been on, from a personal level and the growth I have seen in my team. **Face-to-face participant 65***

The following extracts from the data show how the participants experienced feeling grateful for the positive changes that occurred in their lives from attending the online Interpersonal Intelligence workshop and the personal growth they experienced because of the workshop:

*I'm grateful for the opportunity afforded to me by the company to be part of this programme. I benefited immensely. **Online participant 2***

*It was absolutely a growing experience for me. **Online participant 10***

*I loved the programme and I felt I grew so much from it. **Online participant 15***

*I absolutely loved this workshop & I am so grateful for this experience which will benefit my personal & professional life. There was lots of self-reflection and getting to know one's self better. **Online participant 16***

This training has helped me grow tremendously not only in my career but as well in my personal life. It has given me a different perspective on life and the challenges that we face and how to remain in "Adult". I do feel that a course like this should not be a once off

*course and should be held yearly in order to assist us as a reminder to stay in B4. Very grateful that I could have attended. **Online participant 31***

It is clear that both formats, online and face-to-face, allowed for personal growth whilst on the workshop. With regard to the research question in mind there did not seem to be any difference between the personal growth experienced from either the face-to-face or the online workshop, as participants from both formats saw value in the workshop and were grateful for the personal growth they experienced due to the workshop.

4.3.5 Theme 5: Experienced Irritations

It is important to acknowledge the short falls of any training programme and I was able to find a definite theme in terms of the draining nature of the workshop. Cognitive Behavioural Theory is known to be “draining” and “tiring” and many of my workshop participants felt this way at the end of each day of the workshop. There were also clear instances of connectivity issues on the online workshop only, and a few other interesting comments regarding irritations pertaining to the online version of the workshop. In addition, whilst it is clear from the feedback sheets that many of the participants on the online workshop would have preferred a face-to-face workshop, many acknowledged that they were aware that there was not much that could be done due to the COVID pandemic.

I wonder if there would be more irritations expressed, and if these would be louder, had there been more of a choice? I think there may be a link between participants being grateful for any kind of possible training during lockdown and a willingness to overlook some irritations at the change or the actual virtual set-up.

The Draining Element of Group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

There is a section of theory in the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop where cognitive behavioural techniques are transferred. This seems to be an intense section of potential information overload and a variety of comments centred around the request for a break in the information overload, or a different type of teaching/facilitation method other than just talking it through and giving

examples. The following excerpts are what the face-to-face workshop participants had to say with regard to the theme “The Draining Element of Group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy”:

*Humour in her facilitation which worked quite well because the last 2 days of the course were quite intense for me. **Face-to-face participant 18***

*It [the workshop] was just super tiring and after each day I was TIRED at the end. We were warned that this would happen, and it really did. I took it as a good sign that my body/brain were processing the learnings well. **Face-to-face participant 26***

*I was totally emotionally drained when I arrived home on Friday. I felt vulnerable and slept most of the weekend, could not face any person. However, I am my own self today. **Face-to-face participant 39***

The following excerpts are what the online workshop participants had to say with regard to the theme “The Draining Element of Group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy”:

I think if you made it a day longer it wouldn't feel as hectic, every night I was exhausted and my brain was fried because I was really trying to concentrate and understand what it

*is all about and how to improve upon myself. I felt I needed more time to absorb the information and ask more questions. I needed more reflection time. **Online participant 32***

Cognitive Behavioural training is known to be exhausting as it requires deep levels of thinking, concentration and engagement with one's own issues. It can indeed feel as physically, emotionally, cognitively and mentally tiring as therapy. In an article written by Bennet-Levy and Lee (2014), they explain that often during the use of the Cognitive Behavioural theory, one uses real life examples from one's home and personal life in order to facilitate the learning process, and this process can often lead to feelings of being drained and exhausted. When Cognitive Behavioural theory is done in a group situation it really increases the participants' levels of engagement as people are sharing their own experiences as well as listening to the experiences of other people, which too can lead to feelings of exhaustion and tiredness at the end of the training day (Bennet-Levy & Lee, 2014). From the examples above it is evident that although the course work and Cognitive Behavioural theory approach can be exhausting, it is equally so in both formats. It is also clear that the workshop has positive outcomes overall, as a large number of participants from both the online and face-to-face workshop spoke about the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop having a strong positive effect on both their work life and their home (personal) life despite the workshop being viewed as "draining".

Connectivity Issues Experienced

It is important to note that one of the online workshops was conducted during the looting that took place in South Africa on a mass scale during the week of the 12th of July 2021 (BBC News, 2021). Areas such as Johannesburg and KwaZulu-Natal were especially affected. This specific organisation chose to continue with this workshop during this time. During the unrest in the country, various batteries were stolen from cell phone towers and electricity sub-stations. Our national electricity service provider, Eskom, initiated a rolling blackout load shedding schedule which could have affected some of the participants' online connectivity. The issue around connectivity can be seen in the extracts below for those who struggled with internet connection during the online workshop:

*At my desk my laptop is set up in a closed position. Working with a webcam, the setup is not intended for this in my docking station. I have to change my whole setup to allow the ease of use of webcam's etc. **Online participant 14***

*The only negative aspect about the programme is the fact that it was online instead of Face-to-face and I sometimes struggled with internet connection, however I am aware there is nothing that could be done because of Covid. **Online participant 15***

*I struggled with Internet connection. **Online participant 18***

*The facilitation style was good but I didn't have a camera so I don't think the workshop impacted me as much as it would have if the facilitator was able to see me on the screen. However I think the facilitation was as good as it could possibly be taking in to account the current circumstances. **Online participant 25***

*Absolutely nothing, was worried about the lack of connectivity between us and the facilitator but it was perfect. **Online participant 35***

*Network / Wi-Fi can be challenging. **Online participant 41***

Murphy and Stewart (2017) argued that although there has been a large increase in online learning, there are still many drawbacks. Jordan et al. (2021) argue that one of the most significant drawbacks relates to issues regarding internet connection. This can especially be seen in a South African context as many people do not have access to the internet or computers, and when individuals do have access to computers and internet, often the internet connection is too weak to support online learning (Jordan et al., 2017). In particular, synchronous online learning which involves cameras being on continuously requires even more bandwidth and connectivity, which is not always available in third world countries, especially in countries as economically disparate as South Africa. During one of my workshops, we kept being interrupted by load shedding. With the

course participants being situated all over the country, this created a differing set of difficulties and problems for each course participant, depending on where they were based and the load shedding schedule. Ayebi-Arthur (2017) argues that strong Information Technology is a vital requirement for online learning to be experienced as effective. The following extract indicates great insight into exactly this point:

*I think it is very beneficial that we have the facilities to do a virtual workshop especially not everyone can travel to Joburg or other places for a workshop and having the virtual option makes it much more accessible, and maybe you don't get everything out of it like you would have in a face-to-face workshop but you still get development and as a country as a whole we will probably have much more people joining virtual worlds now that it's become more accessible. **Online participant 4***

In addition to connectivity issues, Murphy and Stewart (2017) argue that factors such as age also play a role in the overall enjoyment and completion rate of online courses or workshops. This is very similar to what I saw being answered on our feedback sheets, as one older participant tended to get distracted if the workshop was not presented in a face-to-face environment. The following excerpt portrays this:

*The programme and online facilitation worked really well considering the circumstances but for me personally it is not a permanent solution, perhaps for someone younger but I get too easily distracted if I am not physically there. **Online participant 28***

This concurs with Richardson and Newby (2006), who conducted a study that examined engagement with regard to online learning. They found that gender, age and previous experience on online platforms was the main driving factor with regard to increased engagement in individuals (Richardson & Newby 2006). The study found that younger students remained more engaged during workshops and were able to utilise additional features on online classes more easily. This also has to do with the fact that many young people receive some sort of computer-based learning during school and therefore become familiar with technology at a much younger age than our previous generation of learners.

Body Language: The Missing Link in Online Training

Presenting the workshops on a virtual/online platform was a nerve-wracking experience from the start as a substantial aspect of my craft is to be able to read body language, which is done much more easily in person during the face-to-face workshops than online through a camera lens. However, through hard work and many online test sessions to get to grips with the online workshop, I felt that I was ready for this challenge. I received many responses on the feedback sheets commending me on my efforts with regard to facilitating the online workshop as well as the participants explicitly saying that they enjoyed the workshop. At the same time, I felt that it was vital that I also looked at the potential downsides of online training, as many of the participants spoke about body language on the feedback sheet. The following excerpts are what the participants had to say about the online workshop in terms of body language:

*It would be nice in no Covid times to do the training face to face to feel the energy and the interaction. **Online participant 8***

*Due to Covid it was run virtually, I would still have preferred a face-to-face facilitation style. Especially in this case because body language plays a big part. **Online participant 12***

*I felt the programme was well run. I would have preferred a face-to-face workshop so that we could all see each other's body language etc, however I understand that this wasn't possible due to Covid- 19 regulations. **Online participant 17***

Hood (2011) argued that there are numerous reasons as to why classrooms or face-to-face learning environments are ideal locations for the understanding of body language. Hood (2011) explains that “Face-to-face classrooms are also sites for the enactment of a range of different spoken genres, from procedures and protocols, to explanations, discussions, arguments, “story” genres and casual conversation” (p. 36). Hood (2011) further explains that body language helps one to understand what the other is saying verbally, as often body language is just as, if not more important than, what is being verbally said. Therefore, it is understandable that some of the workshop participants felt as though they were losing out as body language can be difficult to pick up on a screen as usually one's face can only be seen. Mandal (2014) argues that body language is often so

unconscious that one does not even realise that they are conveying or receiving a specific message through gestures such as one's posture, facial expressions, or a look in one's eye.

The emergence of this subtheme only with regard to the online feedback sheets was fascinating to me. When I compared the responses to the face-to-face feedback sheets, I realised that they emphasised body language, except in a positive way and not as an aspect potentially lacking in the workshop. The following extracts are what the workshop participants had to say with regard to body language on the face-to-face workshop:

*Body language is very important. **Face-to-face participant 3***

*Body language and non-verbal communication is more effective/easier in person. Thanks very much for the great workshop. **Face-to-face participant 48***

*I like Face to face to read body language and emotion better. **Face-to-face participant 68***

*I think a Face-to-face programme is the best for it allows to detect all the gestures and that is key for interpersonal intelligence programmes. **Face-to-face participant 17***

The following extract stood out to me from face-to-face participant 66:

*One of the best course presenter I have come across – brilliant!!!! I like a Face to face, as virtual (online) take away from the human aspect. **Face-to-face participant 66***

The above extract was particularly fascinating to me as even though face-to-face participant 66 was part of the face-to-face workshop, they felt that should the workshop take place online instead of a face-to-face that the course would not be experienced as effective as face-to-face. Although face-to-face participant 66 did not speak about body language per se, it is clear that they felt as though the human aspect of the workshop would be lost over the camera.

“Even Though”

Quite a number of the participants also wrote about enjoying the online workshop “even though” it was online or not presented in a face-to-face format. When workshop participants mentioned words such as “even though” in reference to enjoying or appreciating the online workshop, it seemed to hint at some form of hidden irritation or some form of existing belief that the online version of the workshop would be lacking in some regard compared with the face-to-face workshop. For example:

I loved the facilitation style – even though this was done online, it felt as if we were together. I commend Justine for engaging the audience and keeping the sessions “alive”.

Online participant 3

*I would not change anything about Online facilitation due to the fact that we got to learn what we needed to learn even if we were not in a classroom environment. **Online participant 1***

*The facilitation styles was very good, Justine was great I really enjoyed her as a person and I enjoyed the way she presented the workshop. I do honestly enjoy face-to-face workshops more but there is nothing we can do about it right now during Covid. **Online participant 4***

*Due to covid it was run virtually, I would still have preferred a face-to-face facilitation style. **Online participant 12***

*If it wasn't for Covid I would have preferred a face-to-face facilitation if I had a choice. **Online participant 13***

*I felt the programme was well run. I would have preferred a face-to-face workshop so that we could all see each other's body language etc, however I understand that this wasn't possible due to Covid-19 regulations. **Online participant 17***

*The virtual programme was awesome, even though I still believe that live interaction would have been even better. **Online participant 20***

*There is nothing that Justine could have done differently, considering the pandemic and what we were up against I thought the virtual workshop worked really well, but I would prefer a conventional classroom type environment if I had to vote in the future, hopefully when things go back to normal, I would choose face-to-face versus the virtual environment. **Online participant 28***

Not all comments were the same; there were some differing points of view, such as online participants 34, 36 and 37:

*Face-to-face or virtual I would think that both will work fine with me. **Online participant 34***

*I think both formats will be in order. I enjoyed virtual but I think face to face will just be as good. **Online participant 36***

*I will choose virtual, for convenience. **Online participant 37***

4.4 Applying the Self-determination theory to the results

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a macro theory concerning what keeps individuals motivated and engaged (Reeve, 2013). The theory, as explained by Reeve (2013) and Chiu (2021), looks at explaining the subtleties of human motivation in a social setting. The theory argues that all individuals have three vital needs which will motivate them in to act or not to act. These vital needs include: “autonomy” (p. 2), “competence” (p. 2), and “relatedness” (p. 2). Autonomy is described as having a sense of self-governance over one’s own self (Chiu, 2021). Competence is described as feeling capable in one’s own abilities (Chiu, 2021). Lastly, relatedness refers to feeling a connection to others (Chiu, 2021). An individual’s psychological well-being is satisfied through the presence of all three psychological needs, however at the same time individuals do tend to be oversensitive when not all three of these needs are met (Chiu, 2021).

The subtheme of *The Crucial Impact on both Work and Home Life* relates to the concept of autonomy, relatedness and competence in the Self-Determination theory as in my workshop I use Cognitive Behavioural theory which helps people shift behaviour in a way that can be beneficial in one’s home life as well as work life. This process allowed them to reflect on their own actions

which related directly to their autonomy. They were also able to pinpoint their own behaviours, whether healthy or not, and then made a shift for the better which gave them a sense of competence and feeling capable in one's own abilities. This was since they themselves were responsible for making the necessary changes to their lives. Lastly, the fact that many participants shared their own stories and experiences gave the group a sense of relatedness as many individuals realized that they shared very similar experiences to other participants on the workshop.

The main theme of *The Effect of an Informal Learning Environment Life* relates to the concept of autonomy, relatedness and competence in the Self-Determination theory. An informal learning environment creates a more relaxed setting where one can in turn absorb more knowledge. The pressure is taken away which allows individuals to have more autonomy and competence since they can think for themselves, at their own pace. It also creates a sense of relatedness as individuals open at a more personal level whilst sharing their own experiences, due to the friendly and informal learning environment.

Lastly, the subtheme *The Relevance of Role-Play in Cementing New Thoughts* engaged with the 3 aspects of the Self-Determination theory. The participants were able to give their own scenarios that they would like to act out during the workshops. These specific role-played examples allowed each workshop participant to work on individual behaviour and therefore gave them a sense of autonomy as they were able to work on themselves, through their own examples, and they also had the choice of what they would like to share with the group and what they kept private. It further gave them a sense of competence as they were able to make these desired changes for themselves.

Lastly, it created a sense of relatedness as many of the participants shared similar role -playing examples.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to illustrate the complexities that go hand in hand with training courses, but more specifically comparing the face-to-face version of the Interpersonal Intelligence workshop with the online workshop. It became quite clear that there was similar feedback from both formats of the workshop with regard to perceived value and impact. The value of eye-opening information as well as the crucial impact of the workshop on both home and work life were recognised and appreciated on both formats. While effect of an informal learning environment and making use of everyday examples to make memories was appreciated in both formats, the data seemed to indicate that face-to-face participants had more of a feeling of the impact of a safe space being created than their online colleagues.

Engagement played a significant role in cementing the learnings from the workshop. And true to theory, “Engagement does indeed always win”, in both formats. The subthemes under the “Engagement” section, both the importance of humour and naughtiness as well as the relevance of role-play in cementing new thoughts, seemed to play out similarly in both formats. “Gratefulness for Personal Growth” as a theme also played out equally in both formats.

“Experienced Irritations” is where the difference between the formats came in to sharp focus. While the draining elements of group CBT were equally weighted in both formats, the subthemes

of connectivity issues, body language: the missing link and the “Even Though” commentary, came in as much more relevant to the online version of the workshop.

Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In addition to a summary, this chapter includes the limitations of my study and a section on the recommendations for future studies. Chapter 4 of this study looked at five themes which emerged from the feedback sheets that the course participants filled in with regard to their experiences of either the online or face-to-face Interpersonal Intelligence workshop. Through the analysis of these five themes important findings emerged which helped me to gain a better understanding of this chosen topic as well as to give a more in-depth recommendation of future studies.

In summary, the five themes were generated through an iterative coding process, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps to thematic analysis. Through the analysis section of my thesis it became apparent that my findings from the data supported my theoretical framework, which is spelled out in the literature review chapter of my thesis. The existing theory that I used in order to back up my research was the Self-Determination Theory, which looked at how to keep individuals motivated and engaged when facilitating or teaching. This was highly relevant to my research as keeping my workshop participants engaged, specifically during online training, was my biggest concern. The results from the data were very similar to findings by Reeve (2013) and Chiu (2021). These authors argued that learners perform better when certain psychological needs are met, such as feeling safe in their learning environment. I attempted to create a safe space and learning environment for my workshop participants. While comparing the feedback, particularly in the subtheme "Creating Safe Spaces" it became evident that the responses with regard to feeling safe

came across stronger and more prominently from participants who participated in the face-to-face workshop. The participants in the online workshop made minimal reference to the subtheme “safe spaces”, although there was an overall sense that participants felt safe enough to share their personal examples and experiences with the group. Both my online and face-to-face participants feedback fits with Chiu’s (2021) Self-Determination Theory and his three main elements, namely “autonomy” (p. 2), “competence” (p. 2), and “relatedness” (p. 2), that he advocates for in order to keep learners motivated and engaged.

5.2 Limitations

Due to the limited number of feedback sheets received (online workshop = 41 participants and face-to-face workshop = 70), as well as the non-random sampling method that was employed, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to all course participants whether workshops are facilitated in an online or face-to-face format. The sampling method used was a purposive sampling method which was employed in order to identify participants for the purpose of this study. In order to establish transferability in my research I provided a detailed description of how I gathered my data. I also indicated what groups of people attended my Interpersonal Intelligence workshops in order to allow other researchers to conduct a similar study with different research participants. Similarly, each course participant experiences the workshop subjectively, and their experience might also be influenced by the group they were in as well as their nomination via the organisation. It is also important to note that although the data cannot be generalised this does not mean that the experiences of the course participants are any less valid and relevant. This is due to the fact that qualitative research aims to investigate some nuances further, instead of trying to

generalise findings. A further limitation was that it was possible that some of the feedback sheets were filled in quite vaguely and therefore not all feedback sheets were as insightful as others. I found that it may have been a better choice to use the feedback sheets as the starting point of my thesis and then use focus group discussions in conjunction with my feedback sheets in order to gather more insightful data. However, the problem with this and why I did not employ a focus group discussion was that firstly, my feedback sheets had to be de-identified in order for me to try and remain objective in my analysis, although I am fully aware that I am a subjective being. Secondly, due to the POPIA act as well as the fact that the majority of the course participants were working from home and I was unable to contact them out of the blue. So, while a focus group discussion would have been a helpful way to gain a deeper insight into what the participants' experiences were of both workshops' formats, it seemed efficient to make use of the data already collected.

5.3 Recommendation for future studies

South Africa is a country where the vast majority of the populace has become used to having to deal with ineffective State Owned Enterprises, interrupted electricity supply and general haphazard services. Does this resilience born from experience predispose South Africans to be more accepting and understanding of irritations such as issues with connectivity or Wi-Fi problems, problems with computer sound and problems with computer cameras?

Another aspect to potentially consider for future research, may be to investigate if participants would be less accepting of some of the technical issues, if the change was not forced upon them. So, if individuals had more of a choice, future research may want to look at whether or not

individuals are more accepting of perceived hindrances and stumbling blocks if they know that they do not have a choice in the matter (Theron et al., 2021).

There may also be an opportunity for further research with regards to pre-existing beliefs of how online may be inferior to face-to face learning. There might be a need to investigate whether this leads to a fear of missing out for online participants, particularly for those who believe that the face-to-face version of the workshop is more engaging.

While I looked at comparing computer-based learning vs face-to-face learning historically in the literature review, currently the definition of online learning has changed to being synchronous learning using online learning platforms. There may be a need to further investigate the differences between people's attitudes in the past and pre-existing beliefs about this terminology before synchronous online learning platforms, and now that there are much more immediate and engaging ways of learning online. There may need to be a more in-depth review of terminology needed and an update in terms of definitions, given the sudden growth experienced globally and forced change with regard to the use of synchronous online learning platforms.

It may be important to conduct further research on whether engagement is even more significant in an online workshop given less unstructured opportunity to interact with peers off the cusp. Having less opportunity to interact with peers in an online setting may also affect the processing of information for the participants.

5.4 Conclusions with regard to answering my key research questions

In response to my key research question, *What are the differences and similarities between adult learners' experiences of the cognitive-behavioural training workshop when performed virtually versus face-to-face*, I picked up on some clear similarities as well as some unique differences that emerged through the coding process. There were five main over-arching themes that came to light; namely “The Link Between Perceived Value and Impact”, “The Effect of an Informal Learning Environment”, “Engagement Always Wins”, “Gratefulness for Personal Growth” and “Experienced Irritations”.

Predictably one of the differences that stood out almost immediately was that the feedback sheets that we received from the face-to-face workshops had no comments about connectivity issues or technical issues as the workshop was presented in-person through a traditional classroom set-up. “Experienced Irritations” comments from those in the face-to-face workshop revolved more around the course participants themselves feeling drained or tired at the end of the workshop. While this subtheme expressing the draining element of cognitive behaviour therapy was mirrored in the comments from the online participants, there were a few additional subthemes unique to the online participants' feedback. These subthemes were “Connectivity Issues”, “Body Language: The Missing Link” and “Even Though”. The “Even Though” subtheme involved participants stating that even though they enjoyed the online workshop they would prefer a face-to-face workshop if they had the choice. This seems to suggest that there is an enduring belief that face-to-face workshops are better.

Another difference in the feedback from the participants in the different formats was found under

the theme “The Effect of an Informal Learning Environment”. When looking carefully at the subtheme “Creating Safe Spaces” there seemed to be more mention and appreciation of feeling secure in the environment created from participants in the more traditional face-to-face version of the workshop.

For the rest of the themes and subthemes, both formats seemed remarkably similar in their feedback. The themes generated from the coding process in both the online and face-to-face versions of the workshop “The Link between Perceived Value and Impact”, “Engagement Always Wins”, “Gratefulness for Personal Growth” as well as the ensuing subthemes “Eye-Opening”, “The Crucial Impact on Both Work and Home life”, “Using Everyday Examples to Make Memories”, “The Importance of Humour and Naughtiness”, “Relevance of Role-play in Cementing New Thoughts” and “The Draining Element of Group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy” came about with similar relevance.

5.5 Conclusion

This study aimed to better understand and investigate the experiences of course participants’ feedback from both an online and face-to-face workshop. The nuances of our findings are found in the body of this thesis. While there seemed significant similarities some interesting differences were also found, mostly in the subthemes “Creating Safe Spaces”, and Theme four “Experienced Irritations”.

Overall, it is important to note that according to the responses every course participant enjoyed the workshop and found it valuable and would also recommend both the online and face-to-face

version of the workshop. However, when looking at the comments that the course participants wrote in order to back up whether they found the workshop to be a valuable learning and growing experience, it emerged that there were some clear differences between the experiences of participants on each format (face-to-face and online) and it was important for us to delve into these differences. At the same time, these differences were not compelling enough to derail whether the programme was viewed or experienced as effective and as effective enough to recommend to others.

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Appendix A: Interpersonal Intelligence Feedback sheet



Psychology at Work Reg. Co. 2006/020220/23
HPSCA Reg. No. PMT0058688
VAT Reg. No. 4040231179

Office: +27 (0) 975 2710
Fax: 0866 110 588
Email: admin1@psychologyatwork.co.za
Address:
34 Silvermist Estate, Lavender Lane
Vierlanden – Durbanville 7550
Cape Town – South Africa

psychologyatwork.co.za

INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE PROGRAMME EVALUATION FORM

YOUR NAME:		YOUR COMPANY:	
FACILITATOR:	Justine Jackson-Fraser	PROGRAMME:	Interpersonal Intelligence

1. Did you find this a valuable learning / growing experience? <i>(please comment)</i>	YES	NO
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2. **What did you learn about behaviour types in a way that could assist you in understanding the behaviour of other people?:**

3. **What did you learn about conflict management and resolution?:**

4. **What did you learn about giving and receiving critical feedback?:**

5. **What specifically about the facilitation style can be improved upon?: *(please provide suggestions)***

6. **What did you not like about the programme and how could it be improved? *:(please provide suggestions)***

7. Would you recommend this programme to others?	YES	NO
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Any other comments?



Appendix B: REC Approval Letter



NOTICE OF APPROVAL

REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

9 September 2021

Project number: 22186

Project Title: Adapting to a Covid World: A Comparative Study of participants experiences of Online vs. Face-to-Face Facilitation

Dear Miss JL Jackson

Co-investigators:

Your response to stipulations submitted on 06/09/2021 14:53 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE).

Please note below expiration date of this approved submission:

Ethics approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
5 August 2021	4 August 2024

GENERAL REC COMMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS PROJECT:

INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

1 If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: SBE, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (22186) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

You are required to submit a progress report to the REC: SBE before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

Once you have completed your research, you are required to submit a final report to the REC: SBE for review.

1 Included Documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Proof of permission	CK 2 Document Company Registration	23/06/2021	1
Research Protocol/Proposal	JL Jackson 11578319 thesis proposal	28/07/2021	2
Privacy Impact Self-Assessment Report	JL Jackson Privacy impact self-assessment	29/07/2021	1
Non-disclosure agreement	NDA INTERNAL-FIELDWORKER	06/09/2021	1
Default	JL Jackson RESPONSE LETTER	06/09/2021	2

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at

cgraham@sun.ac.za. Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioral and Education Research

*National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.
The Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2nd Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.*