



**Exploring narcissism as an influential personality trait  
for established entrepreneurs**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Research focused on gaining a better understanding of the entrepreneurial personality and related psychological characteristics continues to be of interest. Narcissism has often been associated with the entrepreneurial personality, with some scholars highlighting how it is a personality trait that is central to entrepreneurship. Narcissism has also been suggested as having significant positive and negative influences on the entrepreneurial journey. This research study set out to explore the narcissistic traits of established entrepreneurs so as to gain deeper insights into the prevalence of narcissism, and also to understand how it influences the entrepreneurial journey both positively and negatively.

The study employed a qualitative, exploratory approach in order to gain new insights and a deeper understanding of the dynamic between narcissism and entrepreneurship. 12 in-depth interviews were conducted with established entrepreneurs across various industries.

The findings of the study indicated the prevalence of narcissistic traits among established entrepreneurs. The study contributed to existing literature through emerging insights related to a dynamic of identity separation among entrepreneurs that involved an Authentic Identity and an Entrepreneur Identity. Also, the positive and negative influences of narcissistic traits on the entrepreneur's personal development as well as their business journey provided new insights.

## **KEYWORDS**

Entrepreneurial personality; narcissistic traits; influential personality traits; positive narcissistic traits; negative narcissistic traits

## **DECLARATION**

*I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.*

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11 March 2020

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

### 1.1 Introduction

Entrepreneurship continues to be of great interest to scholars around the world due to the power it has been seen to have to empower and transform societies (Kuratko & Morris, 2018). Entrepreneurship has also been seen as playing an important role in sustainable development and addressing some of society's economic and social ills (Dhahri & Omri, 2018). Understanding the elements involved in driving entrepreneurship is important due to the impact it can have on growing and developing society (Dhahri & Omri, 2018, p. 73; Zahra, Wright & Abdelgawad, 2014). However, much remains to be understood about the personality of entrepreneurs and the type of insights this understanding can provide to entrepreneurship behaviour research.

In order to gain a better understanding of the types of people who are involved in entrepreneurship, a considerable body of research has focused on examining the entrepreneurial personality and related psychological characteristics (Antoncic, Kregar, Sing & DeNoble, 2015). Extensive research continues to be done on the personality traits that are dominant to entrepreneurs with the aim of understanding their drivers and motivators (Wiklund, Mokolaev, Shir, Foo & Bradley, 2019) as well as understanding personality traits that could predict entrepreneurial success (Leutner, Ahmetoglu, Akhtar & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2014). As success has often been difficult to define, research around entrepreneurial personality characteristics has evolved with the aim of attempting to predict and understand entrepreneurial activity and intentions (Antoncic et al., 2015). This highlights the influence of personality traits on entrepreneurial outcomes overall.

Navis and Ozbek (2016) suggest that narcissism is a personality trait that is central to the entrepreneurial personality. It has been indicated as a trait that not only develops courage in individuals (Liu, Li, Hao & Zhang, 2019; Wiklund et al., 2019), it also has been described as a motivating force for leaders and entrepreneurs alike (Pinto & Patanakul, 2015; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Macenczak, Campbell, Henley & Campbell, 2016). Understanding the elements of narcissism that are prevalent in entrepreneurs is an area of research that is currently minimally explored.

This research study therefore aims to explore whether established entrepreneurs possess narcissistic traits, and whether those narcissistic traits have played a positive or

negative role throughout their entrepreneurial journey. The study also aims to explore how the identified narcissistic traits are perceived to be influential personality traits for established entrepreneurs. After an extensive review of the available literature on narcissism and the entrepreneurship personality, specific narcissistic traits have been identified as the most common. These traits include an inflated positive view of self, self-enhancement, superiority, entitlement and exhibitionism (Liu et al., 2019; Macenczak et al., 2016; Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell & Bushman, 2008; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013). This study will be of interest as it will provide further insight into the personality of established entrepreneurs, and assist to build a greater understanding of which traits may contribute to the progress of entrepreneurs throughout their entrepreneurial journey.

## **1.2 Purpose of the research**

The purpose of this research is to explore the narcissistic traits of established entrepreneurs, so as to gain deeper insight into narcissism and how it influences the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs. Insights will be gained from established entrepreneurs by understanding how they perceive that the identified narcissistic traits have or have not (positively or negatively) played a role in them functioning as entrepreneurs. Exploring the prevalence of the key narcissistic traits will also bring insights into the nuances of the entrepreneurial personality and psychology.

The study will be important in terms of contributing to the literature related to entrepreneurial personality dimensions, as well as the work done to understand how narcissism has played a role for individuals within their journey of entrepreneurship. Narcissism has been positively associated with entrepreneurial motivation, intentions and action (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Jonason & Webster, 2010; DeNisi, 2015; Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Shepherd, 2015). For the purposes of this study, understanding what narcissistic traits entrepreneurs possess may also likely assist with contributing to the identification and nurturing of future entrepreneurs and may provide better insights in how to hone such personality traits so as to encourage a much-needed increase in the number of active entrepreneurs (Herrington, Kew & Mwanga, 2017). This research may also provide an additional perspective to entrepreneurial research which may also inform talent sourcing as well as investment funding (Wiklund, et al., 2019).

The entrepreneurial personality has been an area of continuous research due to the impact that personality traits have been found to have on the entrepreneurial process (Liu et al., 2019). Scholars have also found that personality has been a predictor of

entrepreneurial success outcomes and thus have found scope for research in terms of understanding the nuances and insights related to this connection (Leutner et al., 2014). However, research has often focused on the work done to understand the link between entrepreneurial intent and behaviour (Shirokova, Osiyevskyy & Bogatyreva, 2016; Esfandiar, Sharifi-Tehrani, Pratt & Altinay, 2019), and has also often considered entrepreneurial activity at its nascent stages (Liu et al., 2019; Antoncic et al., 2015; Shirokova et al., 2016). This study will focus on exploring established entrepreneurs, who are defined as those entrepreneurs who have been actively practicing as owners or managers of their businesses for more than three and a half years (Bosma & Kelley, 2019). Previous research has focused on student and nascent entrepreneurs (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016), and this allows for an additional perspective to the personality dimensions from those have been actively functioning as entrepreneurs and have moved past the point of persistence in the entrepreneurial process (Bosma & Kelley, 2019).

Furthermore, in terms of the purpose of the research, the importance of continuous entrepreneurial research within the context of emerging markets has been previously highlighted (Smallbone, Welter & Ateljevic, 2014). While the focus is often on aspects such as infrastructure and access to capital when it comes to entrepreneurship in emerging markets (Smallbone et al., 2014), this study aims to focus specifically on the psychological dimensions of entrepreneurs with a focus on narcissism, an area that is considered a newer aspect of entrepreneurial research. The focus has often been on various aspects of the entrepreneurial personality such as the impact on entrepreneurial intention, action, performance and success. Studies have also often focused on other personality traits that have been considered to be more significant. Only recently has the focus shifted to the link between narcissism and entrepreneurship as there is a realization of the important role that narcissism plays in the field of entrepreneurship (Liu et al., 2019; Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016, DeNisi, 2015; Klotz & Neubaum, 2016).

The knowledge gap exists in understanding if narcissism is not only prevalent among established entrepreneurs, but whether they perceive those narcissistic traits as having had a positive or negative influence on their entrepreneurial journey. The prevalence of narcissistic traits will be explored due to the suggested links between narcissism and entrepreneurship (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Liu et al., 2019) as scholars suggest that narcissism is seemingly “an underlying construct explaining entrepreneurship” (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013, p. 528). The study extends the current literature related to the

entrepreneurial personality and psychology through exploring the detail of the narcissistic layer of entrepreneurs and providing insights into how narcissism may in fact be an integral personality dimension of those who are established entrepreneurs as it is an essential trait to becoming an entrepreneur. Within organizational behaviour research, there are often associations between CEOs and their entrepreneurial orientation, processes and practices (Wales, Patel & Lumpkin, 2013; Pinto & Patanakul, 2015; Al-Shammari, Rasheed & Al-Shammari, 2019). It is this common association that suggests a link between CEO leadership and entrepreneurship (Reid, Anglin, Baur, Short & Buckley, 2018), and thus some studies that have linked narcissism to the enhancement of project management and leadership are of great interest in researching narcissism within entrepreneurship (Pinto & Patanakul, 2015; Al-Shammari et al., 2019). With the growing interest on the impact of narcissism on leadership behaviour and decision-making (Martinsen, Arnulf, Furnham and Lang-Ree, 2019; Al-Shammari et al., 2019; Pinto & Patanakul, 2015), exploring the role of narcissism in entrepreneurship is a fitting extension to the literature due to the drivers of entrepreneurship also being linked to leadership behaviour and decision-making among other factors (Neneh, 2019; Antonakis & Autio, 2014; Reid et al., 2018);

### **1.3 Research Problem**

The research aims to contribute to the literature related to entrepreneurial personality traits, and more so to achieve a more holistic and balanced view of entrepreneurial characteristics (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013). The aim is focused on discovering the key narcissistic traits prevalent amongst those who have been operating as entrepreneurs for three and a half years or longer (Bosma & Kelley, 2019). While several traits have been described by different scholars in line with this research avenue (Pinto & Patanakul, 2015; Al-Shammari et al., 2019; O'Reilly III, Doerr, Caldwell & Chatman, 2014; Twenge et al., 2008), the key traits in discussion for this study are those which appear to be the more commonly described among scholars not only in line with the narcissism personality dimension, but also in descriptions related to entrepreneurial personalities.

Understanding entrepreneurs is critical due to the gradual transition to an "entrepreneurial economy that has highlighted the significance of (small) entrepreneurs (Dhahri & Omri, 2018, p. 65). Research on narcissism in a business context has predominantly been within organizational behaviour as well as organizational leadership context (Pinto & Patanakul, 2015; Al-Shammari et al., 2019), however minimal work has

been done in relation to the entrepreneurship field. A study on the role of narcissism within entrepreneurship was previously done by Mathieu and St-Jean (2013), however the focus was specifically on entrepreneurial intentions. Hmieleski and Lerner (2016) also focused their study on entrepreneurial intentions, however the perspective was from looking beyond the positive characteristics associated with this intention, and unpacking how those traits that are often considered negative actually form part of the motivation for those becoming entrepreneurs. This study contributes to this area of research by exploring the narcissism dimension within existing entrepreneurs further so as to start to gauge the prevalence, significance and influence on the entrepreneurial personality and journey, more so as a significant and required trait for those aiming to operate as entrepreneurs in the long term.

The studies carried out in the field of narcissism in relation to entrepreneurship have predominantly been quantitative, and have used the Narcissism Personality Inventory (NPI) as a base for the measurement methods used (Al-Shammari et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2019; Ames, Rose & Anderson, 2006). The NPI is a widely used form of measurement in relation to narcissism. It is therefore a necessary opportunity to conduct a qualitative study to contribute to the body of knowledge that currently exists in this field, and explore the subject in its depth to gain a more holistic understanding of the influences within the field.

Research has often compared the main personality traits of entrepreneurs to narcissistic traits, therefore the research study aims to contribute to the knowledge gap in entrepreneurial personality research through exploring the details of the narcissistic traits found in established entrepreneurs, with the aim of gaining deeper insights related to entrepreneurial activity, motivation and psychology (Al-Shammari et al., 2019), and entrepreneurial outcomes overall.

Considering the research problem presented above, the research questions of this study are:

- 1. Are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) prevalent among established entrepreneurs during their entrepreneurial journey?**
- 2. How are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) perceived to**

**positively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?**

- 3. How are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) perceived to negatively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?**

#### **1.4 Research Scope**

The researcher will interview a minimum of 12 established entrepreneurs in South Africa, with the exploration being around whether narcissistic traits exist according to their own descriptions of themselves. Furthermore, to establish whether those traits have influenced their entrepreneurial journey negatively or positively. It will also be important to explore the influence of those traits when looking at the start of their entrepreneurial journeys and where they are at the time of the interview. The NPI will be used as a guideline to explore the prevalence of narcissism within the respondents, and there will be particular attention paid so as to avoid self-reporting bias. The researcher will use a guideline to explore the entrepreneurs' experience and understanding of their own narcissistic traits that exist. Exploring the narcissistic traits of the established entrepreneurs will include probing based on responses, and insights learnt from the process will be used to add to the knowledge base around narcissism and the entrepreneurial personality, as well as the influence of narcissism on the entrepreneurial journey.

#### **1.5 Conclusion**

The purpose of the study is to contribute to the knowledge gap in relation to the existence and prevalence of narcissistic traits within established entrepreneurs, and how those traits have contributed positively or negatively to the entrepreneurial journey. This research aims to benefit scholars, policy makers and business leaders alike with a contribution towards knowledge that provides more insights into the entrepreneurial personality and the motivations thereof. It also aims to provide an additional perspective to entrepreneurial personality research which can inform academic research, public policy conversations, recruitment, talent sourcing and investment funding within the entrepreneurship space.



The literature review in the next chapter provides context to the focus of the research, and builds an understanding around the theories and insights in relation to entrepreneurship, narcissism, and the breakdown of the relevant narcissistic traits that will be explored within the context of this research. The understanding built in this chapter will inform the research questions that will address the purpose of the study which is to explore the narcissistic traits of established entrepreneurs. The paper will then outline the methodology approach for gathering data in line with the research questions and the research propositions.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Entrepreneurship has been highlighted as an important activity that has an influence on the culture and demographic of society in that it has an impact on “an increase in the middle class, productivity, innovation and a progressive society” (Liu et al., 2019, p. 9). In a country such as South Africa where the unemployment rate continues to increase year on year (Stats SA, 2019), finding other means beyond employment has become a necessity for society. There is a need to engage on understanding the dimensions of entrepreneurship with the aim of increasing entrepreneurial activity.

Scholars have highlighted the importance of continuous research on entrepreneurs and the factors that influence and help the growth of entrepreneurship. This is especially important in emerging economies, where unemployment remains a growing crisis and entrepreneurship is seen as a solution to society (Dahri & Omri, 2018, p. 73).

This study focuses specifically on the psychological dimensions of entrepreneurs, with a focus on the narcissistic traits found in established entrepreneurs, and their influence thereof.

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Report for South Africa (Herrington, Kew & Mwanga, 2017), South Africa continues to be one of the key countries globally considered to have low levels of entrepreneurial activity consistently. There is also a continuous drop in entrepreneurial intentions and activity year on year which is concerning in a country with increasingly high unemployment, a figure which currently sits at 27,6%, the highest it has ever been (Stats SA, 2019). Further to this, the entrepreneurial landscape continues to be challenging, with the established business rate in South Africa being five times lower than those of other countries within the African region, and has dropped in recent years (Herrington, Kew & Mwanga, 2017). The GEM Report further indicates the challenges around the low number of those who actually do start businesses struggling to survive, and this is shown through such figures as the 67% of businesses in 2016 which closed down due to not being profitable or struggling to stay open due to a lack of access to capital. There are also issues highlighted around inefficient government processes and policies and challenges around bureaucracy that impact entrepreneurial activity. This highlights the numerous challenges that have an

impact on access to market for small business, entrepreneurial activity and the development of an entrepreneurial culture. Gaining a deeper understanding of the entrepreneurial personality through researching the possible influence of narcissistic traits on established entrepreneurs will allow for engagement related to conditions within entrepreneurship, and the cultivating of enabling environments to allow for entrepreneurs to thrive and sustain themselves in the field.

## **2.2 The Importance of Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship has been described as an “arduous process that requires hard work, persistence, resilience and stamina (Liu, Zhu, Serapio & Cavusgil, 2019, p. 2). As indicated in the previous chapter, the power and potential of entrepreneurship is in the ability to empower people and transform societies (Kuratko & Morris, 2018). Entrepreneurship goes beyond starting a new venture, and is more linked to creativity, new approaches and innovation (Kuratko & Morris, 2018; Martinsen et al., 2019; Tiago, Faria, Couto & Tiago, 2015). Understanding entrepreneurs is critical due to the gradual transition to an “entrepreneurial economy that has highlighted the significance of entrepreneurs (Dhahri & Omri, 2018, p. 65).

Beyond the positive impact on society, it is suggested that entrepreneurship has a positive impact on an individual’s well-being and is a source for growth and personal development (Wiklund et al., 2019. P. 580). Sustainable development in relation to economic growth, human development and environmental quality is also a key outcome of entrepreneurship (Dhahri & Omri, 2018, p. 67) and thus the field continues to be an important area for continuous research due to its impact on society.

## **2.3 The Entrepreneurial Journey**

With the indication that entrepreneurship is filled with “a wreckage of failed start-ups” (Picken, 2017, p. 7) and where entrepreneurs are known to fail several times as they attempt to create new ventures (Cha & Bae, 2010), clarity on the definition of the entrepreneurial journey is important so as to understand the greater context of this study. Cha and Bae (2010) describe the entrepreneurial journey as “the series and combinations of entrepreneurs’ autonomous, innovative, and unpredictable or improvised actions and interactions” (p. 32). This description highlights the malleable nature of a field that at its core is about an entrepreneur transforming not just intent, but “potentiality” of opportunity into actual value in new business” (Cha & Bae, 2010, p. 32). On the other hand, McMullen & Dimov (2013) emphasize the link to the entrepreneurial

journey and time, and also interchange between describing the entrepreneurial journey and the entrepreneurial process, further highlighting the layers and components that involve the journey of an entrepreneur. The authors define the entrepreneurial journey as one that “comprises the sequential encounter and institution of information – through actions and interactions – that becomes embedded in the final product” (McMullen & Dimov, 2013, p. 1493). These authors highlight the focus on time as well as the interaction of several elements on the journey of entrepreneurship. The authors also debate about whether there is an end to the journey, and for the purposes of their study linked the end of the entrepreneurial journey to the realization of opportunity through financial viability.

Cha and Bae (2010) interchange the entrepreneurial journey and the entrepreneurial process, and discuss the ‘process’ similarly in that it is defined as being “composed of three activities: opportunity recognition, gap-filling, and opportunity realization” (p.32). What links both descriptions is the link between the identification of opportunity and the creation of value (Cha & Bae, 2010; Selden & Fletcher, 2015). Selden & Fletcher (2015) highlight the complexities of the entrepreneurial journey in that the view or perspective can change depending on context or perspective, however what seems to be a consensus is that the entrepreneurial journey is difficult to conclusively define because is it not a planned process, but rather involves interactions between purpose and environment among other factors (Selden & Fletcher, 2015).

The emphasis on opportunity, interaction and time is a common thread among all three, and for the purposes of this study, Cha & Bae’s (2010) definition which highlights the consistent interaction between opportunity, resources, and the creation of value (Cha & Bae, 2010, p. 33) summarizes the key aspects that embody the core of the entrepreneurial journey.

## **2.4 Understanding the Entrepreneurial Personality**

Research on the entrepreneurial personality continues to be a necessity so as to build an understanding of the different dimensions of entrepreneurship and those involved in it. Literature has highlighted the challenges around understanding the factors that impact entrepreneurial action, and context and varied circumstances often make this more complex (Neneh, 2019). Also, while there is vast research within the entrepreneurship field, there is no consensus on several factors from the definition of entrepreneurship itself to what entrepreneurship success actually looks like or can be defined as (Leutner

et al., 2014; Shepherd, 2015; Navis & Ozbek, 2016). In line with this, there is also a lack of consensus in terms of truly defining the complexity around the entrepreneurial personality (Antoncic et al., 2015; Brandstätter, 2011; Miller, 2015).

However, even with the challenges outlined, the research related to the entrepreneurial personality is necessary. Leutner et al. (2014) conducted a study on testing how personality predicts entrepreneurial success outcomes, and the findings highlighted how personality can fairly accurately predict several entrepreneurial outcomes, possibly demonstrating the influence of personality on entrepreneurial success. In line with this, Brandstätter (2011) conducted research that also highlighted how personality traits play a more influential role with entrepreneurs due to the malleable nature of the profession, in that often environments are developed and structured according to the entrepreneur's personality.

Entrepreneurs have also been found to often choose to do work that connects to them personally and provides them fulfillment, meaning and growth (Wiklund et al., 2019). On the contrary, Rauch (2014) criticized the highly referenced Big-5 framework (Goldberg, 1990; John, Naumann & Soto, 2008) as a predictor of entrepreneurial activity and outcomes, due to the highly generalized nature of the elements within the framework (Pekkala Kerr, Kerr & Xu, 2017). The varying opinions of the influence of personality dimensions on entrepreneurs is a knowledge gap that continues to drive entrepreneurial research. Research often focuses on the earlier parts of the entrepreneurial process, and thus there is an opportunity to gain insights from the perspective of entrepreneurs who have established themselves in the entrepreneurial space and have moved beyond the initial challenges of nascent of start-up phases of entrepreneurship. Engaging with established entrepreneurs will likely allow for unique insights and may likely provide different associations and results (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Liu et al., 2019).

Furthermore, in researching the key personality traits that impact entrepreneurship, Leutner et al. (2014) found that the personality traits that do not form part of the common and more popular big five have been more successful predictors of entrepreneurial outcomes. Of all the big five personality traits of which there is vast research (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Brockhaus, 1982; Antoncic et al., 2015), Leutner et al. (2014) identified only two of those traits as being most associated with being able to make predictions of one's entrepreneurial journey. The Big Five traits are conscientiousness, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and neuroticism, and Leutner (2014) concluded that only extraversion and agreeableness were the most significant predictors of

entrepreneurial outcomes in comparison to the other traits. Interestingly, Zhao, Seibert and Lumpkin (2010) also conducted a study of which the findings resulted in the suggestion of an additional trait within the Big Five framework, which is risk propensity. This trait is said to be an important and useful predictor of entrepreneurial behaviour and outcomes (Zhao et al., 2010; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013).

## **2.5 Narcissism as a personality type of established entrepreneurs**

Mathieu & St-Jean's (2013) seminal work centered around research into the inclusion of narcissism as a key trait of the entrepreneurial personality, and found that narcissism is indeed an underlying and important construct explaining entrepreneurship. In line with this thinking, Hmieleski & Lerner (2016) found that narcissism is not only a necessary trait of the entrepreneurial personality, but is also responsible for the motivation and progression of entrepreneurs in the real world. While Miller (2015) referred more often to narcissism as the "downside to the entrepreneurial personality or a negative characteristic" (p.3), narcissism has more so been highlighted as a key construct that links to self-efficacy, self-assurance, the need for achievement and power, as well as the need for dominance; which are key traits found to be essential for the survival of entrepreneurs (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Klotz & Neubaum, 2016, Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013). This highlights the need for further research and focus on narcissism as a critical element of the entrepreneurial personality, with the aim of understanding how significantly narcissistic traits influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs. The prevalence of characteristics such as narcissism among experienced entrepreneurs has been a growing area of interest, especially in terms of how a characteristic that is considered negative (Miller, 2015; Furnham, Richards & Paulhus, 2013) can actually be channeled constructively in the field of entrepreneurship (Hmieleski and Lerner, 2016).

Liu et al. (2019) define narcissism as entailing an "inflated positive view of self and a motivation to maintain and enhance the positive self-view (p. 496). Similarly, other scholars highlight the exaggerated nature of the way those who are narcissistic view themselves in a positive light, and feel important and entitled (Hart & Adams, 2014; Macenczak et al., 2016). The need for dominance appears as a consistent description of narcissism in describing its key attributes (Gerstner, König, Enders, & Hambrick, 2013; Martinsen et al., 2019), and this is also linked to descriptions that emphasize the need for "control, status, power and achievement" (Martinsen et al., 2019, p. 166; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Liu et al., 2019). In describing the commonality of narcissism among U.S

presidents, scholars referred to the personality dimension as above, further emphasizing dominance, entitlement, high self-esteem and an inflated sense of self-importance as key attributes (Williams, Pillai, Deptula, Lowe & McCombs, 2018).

As indicated earlier, instead of viewing narcissism as a personality type, some instead define it as personality disorder (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Al-Shammari et al., 2019), while others have found that there has been a trend in leaders and individuals being more narcissistic (Pinto & Patanakul, 2015), highlighting the commonality of the personality dimension especially within a shifting cultural context. In line with the extremities of narcissism, scholars have described narcissists as those who actively seek fame, power, admiration and superiority, while believing they are the most intelligent and the most attractive (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Wang, 2019; Raskin, Novacek & Hogan, 1991; Holtzman & Strube, 2010; Twenge et al., 2008; Macenczak et al., 2016).

Due to the changing culture of people today, narcissism is starting to be viewed as a personality dimension that can be found in all individuals instead of being seen as a negative trait that is only found in some (Pinto & Patanakul, 2015; Liu et al., 2019). While studies around narcissism were previously centered around it being a personality disorder (Navis & Ozbek, 2016), this thinking has shifted due to the prevalence of narcissistic traits among leaders, entrepreneurs and individuals (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Pinto & Patanakul, 2015; Hmieleski and Lerner, 2016), highlighting the commonality of the personality dimension especially within a shifting cultural context (Weiser, 2015).

A significant positive relationship has been suggested between narcissism and entrepreneurial intentions and motives, and narcissism is referred to as a potentially necessary psychological resource that can be channeled constructively within entrepreneurs (Hmieleski & Lerner 2016). The transition from viewing narcissism as a disorder to a common personality characteristic among individuals has allowed for a significant building of understanding that has contributed to literature on narcissism within an organizational context as well as in the entrepreneurial field (Macenczak et al., 2016; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Liu et al. 2019).

Hmieleski and Lerner (2016) highlighted the need for the type of research that will allow for a more holistic and balanced view of entrepreneurial characteristics and how they relate to entrepreneurial outcomes such as productivity. There is also an important discussion related to the opportunity for further research as there is likely a prevalence

of dark triad characteristics among more experienced entrepreneurs, where there is an indication of a high probability that these traits have developed due to the harsh, uncertain and challenging experience of entrepreneurship (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Kautonen, Van Gelderen & Fink, 2015). The authors suggest that the characteristics will likely increase in individuals as they progress to becoming established entrepreneurs.

## **2.6 Narcissistic traits within entrepreneurship**

Some research has been done in order to start to understand the details around the narcissistic traits found within entrepreneurs, and there have been some distinguishing factors found where some traits are more prevalent within entrepreneurs. With the descriptions of narcissism in mind, a key distinguisher of a person with a high self-esteem contrary to someone who is narcissistic is around a strong sense of entitlement and a strong need for validation and applause from others (Liu et al., 2019), highlighting a dependency on public affirmation. Self-efficacy has also been described as a key component to narcissism within entrepreneurs as it linked with the inflation of the view of self (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Liu et al., 2019).

Further to this, when describing narcissistic traits, scholars often refer to an active element in terms of the effort related to a “preoccupation with the self” (Hart, Adams, Burton & Tortoriello, 2017, p. 48) in that narcissists are seen to be continuously aim to reinforce the higher view of themselves (Navis & Ozbek, 2016). This links to the description around a key trait being that of “an ongoing craving for admiration” (Navis & Ozbek, 2016, p. 116). In addition, the desire to “seek media attention and praise” through exhibitionism is reflective of the various descriptions of narcissism and its key traits (Al-Shammari et al., 2019, p. 110).

The key traits described are in line with narcissistic leaders’ desire for personal attention and admiration (Al-Shammari et al., 2019), which links to a view highlighted in the literature of an inflated and overly positive view of self, or a very high self-esteem (Adams, Hart & Burton, 2015, p. 235). Another key trait that comes out of the literature around narcissism is the need for dominance and superiority (Gerstner et al., 2013; Al-Shammari et al., 2019; Petrenko, Aime, Ridge & Hill, 2016). In line with the breakdown of narcissistic traits as described, a further definition is important to note:

Al-Shammari et al. (2019) summarize the key areas of narcissism as “a belief in one’s power and capabilities; a need for validation and reaffirmation from others;



the seeking of fame, praise, and attention; a search for and need for praise, admiration and superiority; and seeking the need to dominate others, narcissistic leaders are motivated to ‘commit greater time and resources to activities that have greater potential to garner attention than to activities that have less of such potential’ (p. 110)

Macenczak et al. (2016) contribute in similar focus areas in terms of the key narcissistic traits, and highlight attributes that can be summarized as being linked to a need for superiority and exhibitionism, entitlement and a desire for admiration (p. 113). The willingness to take risk and the need for the tolerance of risk was often highlighted in the descriptions related to narcissism within entrepreneurship, with the link to risk being related to enhancing the willingness to take initiative while persisting in the face of constant failures and challenges (Foo 2011; Holland & Shepherd, 2013; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). The propensity for risk is considered a trait that helps to enhance the entrepreneurial journey through opening up opportunities for potential success and achievement.

The above descriptions detailing narcissistic traits have been highlighted as key personality traits found in entrepreneurs, and have also been described as necessary traits for entrepreneurs not only in the starting phase of entrepreneurship, but more specifically in the long-term progression of entrepreneurship (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Hmieleski and Lerner, 2016; Liu et al. 2019).

The multi-faceted nature and the commonalities highlighted in the descriptions of narcissistic traits are also found in one of the most common narcissism measurement instruments, with the Narcissism Personality Inventory (NPI) being one of the measurement scales in the field which have been developed and revised by scholars over many decades (Raskin & Hall, 1979). The NPI was adopted and modified to a shorter, less prohibitive version in recent years (Ames, Rose & Anderson, 2006), and this aims to allow for a more manageable measurement of narcissism which still focuses on the key traits highlighted in this paper which include measurements on authority, self-confidence, entitlement and exhibitionism.

For the purposes of this study, the common themes and traits that have been described within narcissism will be focused on and explored with the aim of understanding the prevalence, relevance and possible influence of such traits within established entrepreneurs, whether negatively or positively. The traits highlight a focus on the

internal and external descriptions and impact, and in summary are typically characterized by the following traits; an inflated positive view of self (high self-esteem), self-enhancement, superiority, entitlement and exhibitionism (O'Reilly et al., 2014; Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell & Marchisio, 2011; Singh, Farley & Donahue, 2018; Liu et al., 2019). For ease of reference and to further highlight the key traits found in narcissism, the table below summarizes the key traits from the literature that will be the focus of the research.

**Table 1: Narcissistic traits linked to entrepreneurs as summarized from the literature**

<b>Narcissistic traits</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>References</b>
<b>Inflated positive view of self</b>	This view of self and 'overconfidence' is seen as central to entrepreneurship	Liu et al., 2019, p.496; Navis & Ozbek, 2016
	Overconfident	Martinsen et al., 2019
	Inflated sense of self	Macenczak et al., 2016
	Inflated and positive view of self	Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell & Bushman, 2008
	Described as self-efficacy (big component of entrepreneurial personalities)	Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013
	Self-confidence	O'Reilly III, Doerr, Caldwell & Chatman, 2014
<b>Self-enhancement</b>	"motivation to maintain and enhance the positive self-view"	Liu et al., 2019, p.496
	Attention-seeking and taking credit from others	Twenge et al., 2008
	Low empathy	O'Reilly III et al., 2014
	Risk-takers	Miller, 2015; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Foo, 2011; Holland & Shepherd, 2013
<b>Superiority</b>	Authority	Liu et al., 2019, p.496
	The need to dominate the environment	Gerstner, Konig, Enders & Hambrick, 2013
	Described as dominant and have a high need to control and have power	Martinsen, Arnulf, Furnham & Lang-Ree, 2019
	Feelings of superiority	Macenczak et al., 2016
	Dominance	O'Reilly III et al., 2014

<b>Entitlement</b>	Entitlement	Liu et al., 2019, p.496
	Feelings of entitlement	Macenczak et al., 2016
	A sense of entitlement	O'Reilly III et al., 2014
<b>Exhibitionism</b>	Strong need for validation and applause from others/	Liu et al., 2019, p.496
	Constant desire for admiration	Macenczak et al., 2016
	Social extraversion which is more linked with exhibition and public displays for attention and praise than for the sake of forming emotional connections with people	Twenge et al., 2008
	Grandiosity	O'Reilly III et al., 2014

## 2.7 The link between narcissism and the entrepreneurial journey

Several scholars have found strong links between the personality traits of entrepreneurs and narcissists, specifically the links between self-efficacy, risk propensity and locus of control (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Leutner et al., 2014; Macenczak, Campbell, Henley, Campbell, 2016). This highlights a correlation between narcissism and some of these positive characteristics of the entrepreneurial personality. Additionally, linking other key constructs such as self-assurance, the need for achievement, power and the need for dominance found within entrepreneurs to narcissism (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; O'Reilly et al., 2014). This suggests a stronger link between narcissism and entrepreneurship, as it implies a motivation for self-enhancement opportunity and thus a motivator for entrepreneurial action (Pinto & Patanakul, 2015).

While authors have often described narcissism as having a negative influence on leaders due to decision-making that is linked to enhancing their own self-esteem and feeding their need for exhibitionism (Navis & Ozbek, 2015; Miller, 2015), other links are found describing entrepreneurship as being assumed as "inherently good" and portraying entrepreneurs as heroes (Wiklund et al., 2019, p. 583). The association with narcissism and opportunity recognition and exploitation is important in understanding the connection with entrepreneurship (Navis & Ozbek, 2016), and some authors have found even more direct links to entrepreneurship through suggesting that narcissism plays an important and necessary role in entrepreneurship (Liu et al., 2019).

Wiklund et al. (2019) describe how entrepreneurs are often linked to work that they are connected to and passionate about, while aiming to leave a legacy and “make a mark on the world” (Wiklund et al., 2019, p. 582). This description is closely linked to some of the outcomes expected by narcissists in their quest to source projects and to lead. Narcissistic individuals have been observed as being “dominant, overconfident, and have a high need to control, status, power and achievement” (Martinsen et al., 2019, p. 166). Furthermore, Martinsen et al. (2019) have described narcissism as having positive associations with self-esteem and leadership. This is similar to a description of entrepreneurs in that they have been described as people who like and prefer authority superiority (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Liu et al., 2019).

These descriptions are similar to those found in describing leaders and entrepreneurs, and it has been suggested that narcissists are often likely to become leaders or find themselves in leadership positions (Macenczak et al., 2015). Liu et al. (2019) suggest that the need to actively maintain superiority is a strong motivator for narcissists, and they act so as to ensure superiority and dominance.

The link between narcissism and entrepreneurship is one that shows a knowledge gap that is ripe for research that will attempt to close the gap in understanding the influence of narcissism on the entrepreneurial personality. Mathieu and St-Jean (2013) conducted a study to understand the role of narcissism on the entrepreneurial personality, however they relied on student entrepreneurs instead of experienced entrepreneurs. In their discussion about future research they highlighted the need to test an experienced population of entrepreneurs, which is what this current study focuses on. The aim is to explore whether the narcissistic traits that have been linked with entrepreneurs are indeed present among established entrepreneurs, and whether they are perceived to be as closely linked to the entrepreneurial personality and journey as suggested above.

## **2.8 The positive and negative influences of specific narcissistic traits**

Scholars have often suggested that narcissistic traits can play a negative or positive role on the entrepreneurial journey, and narcissism has been described as a multi-dimensional trait that is dependent on several factors to predict entrepreneurial outcomes (Macenczak et al., 2016; Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Judge, Piccolo & Kosalka, 2009). One thing that some scholars can agree on is that narcissism certainly plays a key role in influencing entrepreneurs and their journey in the field of entrepreneurship (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Liu et al., 2019; Navis

& Ozbek, 2016), and it has been suggested that narcissistic traits – as described and summarized in table 1 – above can impact the entrepreneurial journey in several ways, whether positively or negatively.

### **2.8.1 Positive influences of narcissistic traits**

Hmieleski and Lerner (2016) suggest that narcissism is a necessary psychological resource for participation in the entrepreneurial field, and that the characteristics can be used as positive influences. A key influence scholars suggest is that narcissism plays a positive role in being a motivating factor for entrepreneurs (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Liu et al., 2019; Al-Shammari et al., 2019; Martinsen et al., 2019). This motivation has been linked to several traits which include the need to seek and maintain the superiority and dominance that narcissists believe they possess (Liu et al., 2019), the need to fulfill the “ongoing craving for admiration” (Navis & Ozbek, 2016, p. 116), as well as the desire for personal attention and admiration (Al-Shammari et al., 2019).

Along with being a motivating force, narcissism has also been said to positively influence the entrepreneurial journey through the association with high self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-assurance (Miller, 2015; Martinsen et al., 2019). This higher regard for self has been said to positively influence entrepreneurs in the way they are able to sell themselves or their businesses, as well as the way they are able to influence people to do what they want them to do or adopt to their plans (Navis & Ozbek, 2016). The ability to make people adopt to their vision is further emphasized by the way in which narcissistic entrepreneurs are described as visionaries and big thinkers, and have an expectation that people will adopt to their thinking (Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Hotchkiss, 2003). Being charismatic and overconfident has also allowed narcissistic entrepreneurs to have the ability to get what they want in terms of resources, as well having the ability to influence people and get their support and participation (O’Reilly et al., 2014; Navis & Ozbek, 2016).

The positive influence of narcissistic traits has been said to be important in that it keeps entrepreneurs progressing through challenges that are commonly found in the field, and Miller (2015) describes this as a “special type of individual” (p.2) in that their traits allow them the willingness to take risk, and they “risk their personal resources on a venture that stands a good chance of failing” (p. 2).

The independence and autonomy of entrepreneurs with narcissistic traits is also

highlighted as having a positive influence (Klotz & Neubaum, 2016, p. 8), while the ability to “defy convention” with the aim of getting attention and praise for what they have done further highlights the layers of narcissism that have the ability to have a positive influence on entrepreneurs (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007, p. 352).

The positive influences of narcissistic traits on entrepreneurs are important for the necessary growth and sustainability of the entrepreneurial field (Herrington, Kew & Mwanga, 2017). The ability of narcissism to motivate entrepreneurs to progress through the challenges and uncertainty of entrepreneurship through increasing one’s tolerance for risk while increasing an entrepreneur’s ability to pick themselves up from failure is critical for the progress and growth of businesses and of the field (Miller, 2015; Foo, 2011; Holland & Shepherd, 2013). The ambition as well as the need to own and progress one’s business as the ultimate display of power (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Martinsen et al., 2019) is a key motivation that epitomizes the positive gains of the field based on narcissistic traits. The above suggests that narcissistic traits allow entrepreneurs to progress without getting caught up by doubt and negative possibilities, allowing them to focus on driving their businesses forward with the belief that others will catch up to them eventually (Miller, 2015; Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Hotchkiss, 2003).

### **2.8.2 Negative influences of narcissistic traits**

Contrary to the above examples, similar narcissistic traits can play a completely different role in the journey of an entrepreneur. The harsh, uncertain and challenging aspects of entrepreneurship may also bring about the negative side of narcissism (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Navis & Ozbek, 2016), resulting in negative influences. Also, the extreme nature of some of the narcissistic traits may lead to failure when those traits are excessively high in an individual (DeNisi, 2015). The label ‘narcissistic’ has long been a contentious one that often suggests that people like that are not ideal to be around (DeNisi, 2015; Hotchkiss, 2003). Hotchkiss (2003) even goes as far as prescribing how to deal with narcissists, who are described as controlling, egotistical people.

An inflated view of self has been linked to entrepreneurs believing they can make anything happen with any resource, which has been said to negatively impact their decision-making as well as entrepreneurial success (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Al-Shammari et al., 2019). While a bias towards risk-taking can have a positive influence in that it helps with driving motivation in the entrepreneurship field as described above, the negative side is that the risk-taking could mean that entrepreneurs make risky financial decisions

and investments (Foster, Reidy, Misra & Goff, 2011). Further to this, some negative associations are linked to entrepreneurs who display narcissistic traits through choosing to pursue “questionable ventures” (Navis & Ozbek, 2016, p. 110), in reference to working on ventures that are not necessarily legitimate. This decision-making has also been linked to overconfidence, or an inflated view of self, and beyond the influence on decisions, overconfidence can also affect the entrepreneur through this trait evolving into denial and anxiety (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016).

Arrogance, the perception of entitlement and the inability to accept criticism are also narcissistic traits that have been said to negatively influence the entrepreneurial journey (Wales, Patel & Lumpkin, 2013; Navis & Ozbek, 2016). This has been linked to such individuals being labelled as disagreeable, less flexible, and being conformists due to the need to ensure success so as to gain validation and praise (Martinsen et al., 2019, p. 170; Twenge et al., 2008). This need for validation and self-enhancement may also cause entrepreneurs to not be aware of the situations when they need to adjust their plans completely which would mean deviating from their initial plans (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2011).

Exhibitionism, another identified narcissistic trait, is linked to social extraversion which is about being visible and seeking recognition, however, this is not associated with forming real, intimate and emotional connections with people as the social aspect may imply (Twenge et al., 2008). Engagement with people has often been highlighted as one of the negative outcomes of narcissistic traits found in entrepreneurs, as they are often associated with exploitation, manipulation, and seeking attention through taking credit away from others (Liu et al., 2019; Twenge et al., 2008).

The need for superiority, authority and dominance, identified narcissistic traits, also have the association with negative influences due to the possibility of these traits alienating stakeholders, increasing mistrust, and micro-managing (Miller, 2015, p. 3). Furthermore, Miller (2015) highlights the risk that when narcissistic traits are extreme, they may result in negative outcomes such as aggressive and ruthless behaviour due to the strong need for achievement and power (Bélanger, 2011), or when the desire for achievement, influence, superiority and self-enhancement results in cutting corners or disregarding stakeholders (Miller, 2015, p. 3).

The above descriptions highlight the multidimensional nature of narcissistic traits within entrepreneurs, and it is important to understand that narcissistic traits should not

automatically be associated with positive or negative outcomes as this is not necessarily so (DeNisi, 2015; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016). The key is to build a greater knowledge of the narcissistic traits in detail, and aim to deeply understand how these traits have played a role in the entrepreneurial journey of an established entrepreneur, whether positively or negatively. Table 2 summarizes the positive and negative narcissistic traits as found in the literature, in line with the narcissistic traits summarized and identified earlier on in the chapter (Table 1, p. 16).

**Table 2: Positive and negative influences of narcissistic traits supported in the literature**

<b>Inflated sense of self</b>			
<b>Positive narcissistic traits</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>Negative narcissistic traits</b>	<b>References</b>
Self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-assurance	Miller, 2015; Martinsen et al., 2019	Bad decision-making	Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Al-Shammari et al., 2019
Able to sell themselves of their businesses well	Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016	Denial and anxiety	Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016
Able to influence people	Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Hotchkiss, 2003	Egotistical	DeNisi, 2015; Hotchkiss, 2003
<b>Self-enhancement</b>			
Motivating factor	Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Liu et al., 2019; Al-Shammari et al., 2019; Martinsen et al., 2019)	Motivation to pursue illegitimate businesses	Navis & Ozbek, 2016
Influencer of people for the purposes of support & participation	Navis & Ozbek, 2016; O'Reilly et al., 2014	Manipulator of people to get what they want	Liu et al., 2019; Twenge et al., 2008
Risk-taking for the good of the business	Miller, 2015; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Foo, 2011; Holland & Shepherd, 2013	Risky financial decisions & investments	Foster et al., 2011; Navis & Ozbek, 2016
		Taking credit away from others	Liu et al., 2019; Twenge et al., 2008



<b>Superiority</b>			
Key motivational influence for progression	Liu et al., 2019; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016	Alienating and disregarding stakeholders	Miller, 2015
Autonomy & independence	Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Martinsen et al., 2019)	Increased mis-trust and micro-managing	Miller, 2015
<b>Entitlement</b>			
Confidence	Wales, Patel & Lumpkin, 2013; Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Liu et al., 2019	Arrogance	Wales, Patel & Lumpkin, 2013; Navis & Ozbek, 2016
Self-efficacy	Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Liu et al., 2019	Inability to accept criticism	Wales, Patel & Lumpkin, 2013; Navis & Ozbek, 2016
		Disagreeable and less flexible	Martinsen et al., 2019
<b>Exhibitionism</b>			
Motivating factor	Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Al-Shammari et al., 2019	Lack of awareness when it comes to adjusting plans	Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2011
Being visible and seeing recognition	Twenge et al., 2008; Macenczak et al., 2016	Low empathy and a lack of connection with people	O'Reilly III et al., 2014; Twenge et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2019

## 2.9 Conclusion

The literature review highlights the connection between narcissism and entrepreneurship, and suggests that narcissistic traits likely play a more significant role in entrepreneurship than is commonly documented. The literature also highlights the multi-faceted nature of narcissistic traits within entrepreneurship, where narcissism as a personality characteristic is often assumed to be negative or destructive (Miller, 2015; Navis & Ozbek, 2016). However, the literature starts to explore how narcissistic traits

may in fact play a more influential role on the entrepreneurial journey, and have several positive elements that help to drive the progress of entrepreneurs (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013). The extent of this influence provides opportunity for exploration through this study.

This study aims to extend the current literature through providing opportunity for a deeper understanding of the entrepreneurial personality through specifically concentrating on established entrepreneurs. The aim is to gain more insights related to the prevalence of narcissism among entrepreneurs, and also how the narcissistic traits identified as the key traits based on literature (an inflated positive view of self, self-enhancement, superiority, entitlement, exhibitionism), are found to be influential both positively and negatively to the entrepreneurial journey. Exploring the nature of the influence of narcissism on entrepreneurship is at the core of this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research question and propositions below aim to explore the prevalence of key narcissistic traits within the realm of established entrepreneurs. They also aim to gauge the importance and impact of such traits on the entrepreneurial psychology and process. These questions have been formulated using the information discussed in the literature review.

#### 3.1 Research Questions

**Research question 1:** Are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) prevalent among established entrepreneurs during their entrepreneurial journey?

This research question aims to establish whether the key narcissistic traits identified within the literature review as being prevalent in entrepreneurs, actually do exist specifically within established entrepreneurs. This aims to confirm the prevalence of the key traits which include an inflated positive view of self, self-enhancement, superiority, entitlement and exhibitionism.

**Research question 2:** How are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) perceived to positively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?

This research questions focuses on gaining a deeper understanding of which of the identified narcissistic traits are perceived by entrepreneurs as having positively influenced their entrepreneurial journey. The research question also aims to establish any new insights with regards to the positive experience of established entrepreneurs in terms of how their individual personality traits have played a role.

**Research question 3:** How are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and

exhibitionism) perceived to negatively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?

This research question aims to gain a deeper understanding from another perspective, of which of the identified narcissistic traits are perceived by entrepreneurs as having negatively influenced their entrepreneurial journey. This research questions aims to also unpack insights into how entrepreneurs link their own personalities to any negative outcomes in their entrepreneurial journey.

Based on the research and the summary of the narcissistic traits most linked to entrepreneurs, the research proposes that these narcissistic traits are likely present within established entrepreneurs. The study also proposes that narcissistic traits influence entrepreneurial outcomes. Thus, these are the following propositions in line with the study:

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the research methodology chosen for this study based on the research questions that have been developed and outlined in the previous chapter. An exploratory qualitative study was undertaken for this study, with semi-structured interviews being conducted with 12 established entrepreneurs. The research investigated the prevalence of narcissistic traits among the established entrepreneurs, and also explored how these traits positively and negatively influenced their entrepreneurial journeys. This chapter provides details around the chosen research methodology and outlines the research design, the population, the units of analysis, the sampling method and size, the measurement instrument, the data collection process, the data analysis process, and the limitations of this study.

#### **4.2 Research Design**

Qualitative research is described as the “initial research conducted to clarify and define the nature of the problem” (Zikmund, 2000, p. 102) and is important when researchers are looking to gain new insights or answer some initial questions that have come about in the study (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Qualitative research is also relevant when the aim of research is to gain new perspectives and new insights (Creswell, 2014; Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013). In terms of the impact of qualitative research, it is an approach that is “concerned with interpretation and understanding, and more so on gaining a “holistic understanding of the issues studied”, considering the social context of the study (Eriksson & Kovalainen, p. 4, 2015). It is for this reason that is to explore and gain a holistic understanding of an area of the research that is unexplained that the qualitative research route was considered the appropriate methodology for this study.

Interpretivism has been described as "concerned with subjective and shared meanings, and is about interpreting human action and understanding" (Eriksson & Kovalainen, p. 20, 2015). The exploratory nature of the intended research lent itself to an interpretivist philosophy that allowed for the interpretation of findings based on varied experiences unearthed in the research. An inductive approach was the preferred approach for this study, and is said to often be associated with qualitative research (Cassell & Symon,

2011). The aim was to use the information that was gained in the research collection to attempt to find patterns and relevant themes so as to form a general theory (Patton, 2002). A mono-method was used for the study (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016) as the qualitative method served the purpose of answering the research questions.

As the aim of the study was to gain new insights in the field of entrepreneurship through a deeper understanding of how narcissistic traits influence the entrepreneurial journey, the collection of rich information was critical and thus the appropriate strategy for this study was a semi-structured, in-depth interview strategy (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Due to the time constraints of the study, it was more practical to do a cross-sectional study which is a study that is a snapshot at a point in time (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The researcher was able to source the information required to answer the research questions of the study through this chosen time horizon.

The techniques that were employed for the exploratory study were semi-structured interviews. This method allowed for the collection of new insights and additional information, and also allowed for the ability to expand on certain issues that came up in the research process, which is often expected with this research technique (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The limitations based on the geographical location of the researcher at the time of the data collection required the researcher to conduct the semi-structured interviews telephonically, however the interviewer ensured adequate time was given to each interview with the aim of achieving the benefits of a face-to-face encounter.

### **4.3 Population**

The population that was identified as being the most relevant for this study can be described as business owners in South Africa who currently own and have operated their own businesses for three and a half years or longer (Bosma & Kelley, 2019). This was based on Bosma and Kelley's (2019) description of established entrepreneurs.

### **4.4 Unit of analysis**

The units of analysis required for the research included individual entrepreneurs who are currently established entrepreneurs. Established entrepreneurs are defined as individuals who have been in business as founders and managers for longer than three and a half years (Bosma & Kelley, 2019). These established entrepreneurs were sourced from various industries and sectors, namely: marketing, fashion and retail, events and

hospitality, content and digital media, entertainment and media, IT consulting, music and talent management, financial services, and property development.

The research questions aimed to identify new insights and gain new information and therefore it was important to collect and analyse the data at an individual level for the purposes of the study. In order to ensure the validity of the research, the researcher provided the potential participants a broad understanding of the research questions, which was based on understanding the entrepreneurial personality, specifically narcissism, and the traits that impacted the entrepreneurial journey either positively or negatively. The key term 'narcissism' was left out of the initial briefing so as to avoid possible responder bias which had the potential to jeopardize the outcome of the study. After the telephonic briefing, potential participants were sent informed consent letters and consent forms, and then participants were requested to confirm their voluntary participation by returning signed consent forms and informed consent letters so that the interview could be carried out.

#### **4.5 Sampling method and size**

Purposive sampling was used for participant selection, and this technique was ideal as the nature of the study required the judgment of the researcher to be used in the selection of a sample that will have the experience and required for the achievement of the research objectives (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). In addition, purposive sampling was most ideal as there was a limited number of primary data sources who would be able to contribute to the study, especially with the requirement of established entrepreneurs who own and manage their businesses for longer than three and a half years. The initial participants were selected based on the researcher's networks and referrals and all of the participants provided their permission to undertake in the interview process upon receipt of interview request and consent documentation. These participants were all established entrepreneurs and were purposefully selected based on their tenure as manager/entrepreneurs for longer than three and a half years. Their industries were also considered so as to ensure a variety of industries was included in the sample.

Due to the study being qualitative, the researcher interviewed a minimum of 12 established entrepreneurs in South Africa. The minimum of 12 participants was based on an ideal number to ensure a suitable exploratory process, while also aiming for the research process to reach saturation (Zikmund et al., 2013). The process of reaching data saturation is one that has been greatly explored by several scholars to understand

what constitutes reaching data saturation, as well as the appropriate sample size to reach such saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Saunders et al., 2016; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar & Fontenot, 2013). While varying samples size were suggested across different studies from 6 respondents to as much as 30 (Guest et al., 2006; Marshall et al., 2013; Burmeister & Aitken, 2012), the more highlighted recommendation was based on a greater consideration towards the quality and richness of the data that is being collected (Dibley, 2011; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016). Data saturation is said to be reached when any additional data collected does not provide new insights or any new emergent themes, and also when the information becomes repetitive (Given, 2015; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016). Based on this understanding, the minimum of 12 participants was ideal as data saturation was reached.

#### **4.6 Measurement instrument**

It is suggested by Saunders & Lewis (2018) that some of the most useful ways in which to conduct exploratory research is through the analysis of secondary data as well as in-depth interviews. Semi-structured, telephonic interviews were conducted with established entrepreneurs. On average, the interviews lasted approximately 1 hour. The purpose of the research was explained early in the participant recruitment process to ensure participants understood what was required of them and could assess whether they were interested in discussing their own perceptions and experiences in order to address the research objectives. While there was an interview schedule developed for the study, the semi-structured interview allowed for the sourcing of additional information and the exploration of new insights that came about in the research process.

The first section of the research instrument covered demographic questions so as to establish the context of the entrepreneurs being interviewed as well as their businesses. The rest of the research instrument addressed the research questions through several questions related to establishing the prevalent narcissistic traits, and how they have influenced the entrepreneurial journey.

The interview guideline was derived from the questionnaire used in Liu et al. (2019) research study which focused on unpacking narcissism through its associated variables. Central to the development of the questions was the NPI-16 as modified by Ames et al. (2006), which allowed for the exploration of the identified narcissistic traits within the participants. The narcissism personality inventory and its derivatives are commonly used



(Al-Shammari et al., 2019; Pinto & Patanakul, 2015), and allowed for the researcher to establish the prevalence of narcissistic traits and for the participants to provide insights into how those traits influenced their own journeys. Pinto and Patanakul (2015) have highlighted ways in which to use the narcissism personality inventory as a modified version especially in line with the qualitative methodology route that was employed for this study. Opportunity was found in using a derivative of the scale previously used in Liu et al.'s study (2019) in order to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence narcissism within entrepreneurs, as well as the role that narcissism has played in the entrepreneurial journey.

Reliability and validity are two criteria that have been highlighted as key within the research process (Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Zikmund et al., 2013). It is important to ensure both criteria for this study, especially within the context of exploratory research. One method to ensure the validity and reliability of the study is to standardize the interview questions so that they can be used as a guideline, while allowing enough space for the interviewer and the participants to explore and elaborate on the subject in question. The reaching of the saturation point was key, as this also impacts the validity and quality of the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016). Furthermore, an awareness of possible biases within the study were important to understand as this helped to mitigate against them. These included such biases such as interviewer bias, interpreter bias and response bias (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Due to the exploratory nature of the research, concerns around rigour and trustworthiness were also important to consider and to mitigate against.

#### **4.7 Data collection process**

Data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth, telephonic interviews. The aim was to conduct interviews with questions allowed participants to provide their experiences and perceptions, and also allowed for the gathering of key insights that contributed to the study. The questions which were developed using the literature review were kept simple to avoid any confusion or misinterpretation by the participants. The aim was to have a conversational interview that would be more comfortable for the participants, and open dialogue was encouraged. With the permission of the respondents, interviews were recorded and stored electronically using the researcher's personal computer for the purposes of transcribing and analysing the data gathered. The interview audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher as soon as each interview was done. The researcher used a combination of the recordings, the transcriptions, and

hand-written interview notes as the data that was analysed. All respondents were kept anonymous and data and any quotations were not linked to any name or business.

#### 4.8 Analysis approach

Once the interviews were transcribed, the data was analysed using ATLAS.ti which assisted with the coding process as well as the process of identifying common themes from the interviews. The analysis of data required for this exploratory research was centred around identifying key themes and common insights that emerged from the data collected from the interviews (Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Zikmund et al., 2013). Due to the nature of the study, thematic analysis was employed so as to identify and analyse the patterns or themes that were found in the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The step by step process of thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) that was used for this study is described in Table 3 below. The aim of the thematic analysis process was to ensure robust analysis of the data that was gathered, and very importantly to ensure that themes found within the research were clearly represented through the analysis approach (Zikmund et al., 2013).

**Table 3: Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)**

Phase	Description of the Process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis

The coding and analysis process involved several reiterations, where emergent themes were identified based on ongoing analysis and the recommended method of constant coding (Saunders et al., 2016). The process of analysis was thorough and comprehensive, and the emergent themes were analysed in the context of the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saunders et al., 2016).

#### **4.9 Limitations**

Qualitative research in itself is often described as subjective and can be affected by several biases which is a limitation (Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Zikmund et al., 2013; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). The nature of semi-structured in-depth interviews also involves limitations in that there is a dependence on those being interviewed to proactively provide any new or unknown insights that were not necessarily probed in the interview process. Further limitations were around the practicality of accessing the limited population of people with the appropriate experience and knowledge required to achieve the research objectives, which impacted the diversity of the sample. Another limitation was the possible responder bias based on the telephonic interviews and the researcher's virtual presence. Respondents may have opted to give answers that seemed appropriate so as to gain validation from the researcher (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the results will be presented based on the interviews conducted with the participants who are established entrepreneurs. The findings are presented chronologically according to the research questions, which are as follows:

Research Question 1: Are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) prevalent among established entrepreneurs during their entrepreneurial journey

Research Question 2: How are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) perceived to positively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?

Research Question 3: How are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) perceived to negatively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?

The findings provide interesting insights into the complexity of the prevalence of narcissistic traits, and how those identified traits have actually become a critical part of the entrepreneurs' journey. Furthermore, the findings reveal how the identified narcissistic traits have a duality to them in terms of how they are perceived to impact entrepreneurs, as well as how they manage this duality.

#### **5.2 Description of Sample**

Table 4 below represents a description of the sample of participants who took part in the study. Purposive sampling was used to select the twelve individuals who represent a group of established entrepreneurs, who are described as those entrepreneurs who have been actively practicing as owners or managers of their businesses for more than three and a half years (Bosma & Kelley, 2019). The sample consists of five females and seven males. Beyond a diversity in gender, the researcher aimed to interview individuals who are active within a variety of industries, and the sample includes two participants who operate businesses in the marketing industry, two of them in fashion and retail, and three of the participants are within the events and hospitality industry. The other five participants operate in content and digital media, entertainment and

media, IT consulting, music and talent management, and financial services and property development, respectively.

**Table 4: Description of the sample**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender/Age</b>	<b>Industry/ Number of years as entrepreneur</b>
Participant 1	Female/35	Luxury Marketing and PR/ 7 years
Participant 2	Female/38	Fashion and Retail/ 5 years
Participant 3	Male/45	Financial Services and Property Development/ 16 years
Participant 4	Male/36	Content and Digital Media/ 5 years
Participant 5	Female/35	Fashion and Retail/ 4 years
Participant 6	Male/30	Entertainment and Media/ 7 years
Participant 7	Male/29	Events and Hospitality/ 13 years
Participant 8	Female/37	Marketing and Branding/ 5 years
Participant 9	Male/34	Events and Hospitality/ 12 years
Participant 10	Female/30	Events and Hospitality/ 10 years
Participant 11	Male/35	Music and Talent Management / 9 years
Participant 12	Male/38	IT Consulting/ 6 years

### **5.3 Presentation of Results as per Research Question**

The results of the research are presented based on the research questions that were presented in Chapter 3. This structure of presentation was chosen so as to present the data clearly and logically.

### **5.4 Results for Research Question 1**

**Research question 1:** Are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) prevalent among established entrepreneurs during their entrepreneurial journey?

For the purpose of answering research question 1, the following constructs are discussed under each sub-heading: An inflated positive view of self, self-enhancement, superiority, entitlement, and exhibitionism.

The aim of this research question was to establish whether the key narcissistic traits identified within the literature review were indeed found to be prevalent in the interview sample of established entrepreneurs. These key traits include an inflated positive view of self, self-enhancement, superiority, entitlement and exhibitionism.

### 5.4.1 An inflated positive view of self

The aim of the questions in the sub-section related to establishing the prevalence of the trait ‘an inflated positive view of self’ were geared towards establishing the traits described in Table 1 in Chapter 3 which are related to overconfidence, an inflated sense of self, self-efficacy and self-confidence. There were several questions that were asked with the aim of establishing the participants’ sense of self, their overconfidence, and the insights around how they viewed themselves also in comparison to others. Participants were immediately asked whether they themselves believed they were good at what they do, and were then asked if others viewed them the same. It is important to note the unanimous, confident and unflinching responses to these questions across all of the participants. Terms such as “Definitely”, “100%”, and a number of resounding “Yes I am” responses started off the interviews. A summary of the participants’ thoughts regarding their views and their own sense of self are summarized in Table 5 below. Also, the key findings based on their responses are highlighted and summarized as well.

**Table 5: Key quotes related to understanding high self-confidence**

Participants	Quotes	Summary of findings from the quotes
1	<i>“I feel like I do what I do and I do it because I do it well”</i>	Very high self-confidence and an inflated sense of self reflected easily, especially based on the outcomes they have seen
2	<i>“I’m self-trained, I didn’t study this and I always felt that, can I be the designer that I want to be in my mind? While not knowing the skills and having to learn along the way; and I’ve learnt a lot in the four years that I’ve done it. Now I even mentor other designers”</i>	
4	<i>“I really believe that. I have been doing it for longer – 12 years. I’ve seen it come and go, change and morph, so I know I’m really good at what I do in terms of content and magazines.”</i>	Personal experiences and the length of time as an entrepreneur has played an important role in building high self-confidence
7	<i>“The execution and the scope of what the business I do entails, in most cases when my business is not involved the execution is not the same.”</i>	The comparison of their

11	<p><i>“We have seen positive success. For me I believe in outcomes... So in terms of our core function there is verifiable proof that we can do this”</i></p>	<p>own against others has also been an important builder of an inflated sense of self</p>
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In further trying to establish the prevalence of the trait which is the ‘inflated positive view of self’, participants reflected on whether they viewed themselves as visionaries, extraordinary or special people. This was for the purposes of gaining more insight into the nature of the participants’ sense of self and their levels of confidence. Nine of the participants viewed themselves as visionaries, citing their abilities to think ahead and see beyond what everyone else is seeing as key reasons for their thoughts. In line with the thoughts around being visionaries, four of the participants referred to themselves as extraordinary people. While one participant reiterated similar thoughts described above around being ahead of their time, the other participants highlighted their uniqueness and their rarity.

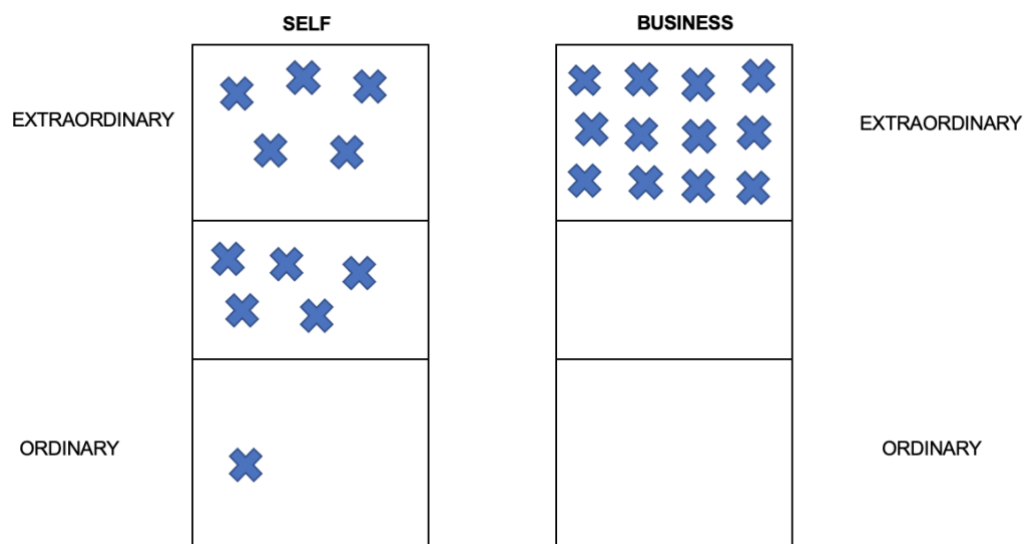
In having to choose where they sit on a scale where on one end there are ordinary people, and on the other end there are special people, five of the participants expressed that they felt they fell right in the middle of the scale and couldn’t choose which end of the scale they could relate to. The main reasoning had to do with comparing what they thought was extraordinary or special, and feeling that they had not accomplished at that level yet. One participant said *“I would say halfway. We’ve done well, but we are exposed to people who have a similar profile of company that have done much better than we have.” (Participant 11)*, while another participant highlighted that while they have a long way to go before they are seen as special, they didn’t view themselves as just ordinary and thus they chose the middle of the scale. It should be highlighted that most participants hesitated when asked to describe themselves as extraordinary or special, and felt more comfortable when referring to how they believed in everyone’s capabilities and abilities. Some participants explained that everyone is capable and the big difference is based more on having the opportunity, being relentless at pursuing one’s goal, or having more belief in themselves than most.

A complexity that became common was introduced by one of the participants who spoke about separating the ordinariness of self and the extraordinary nature of their business: *“I think the business does some extraordinary work for sure. And I do think*

the individuals are, I wouldn't say special, I wouldn't say that. It's a tough one. The term that feels more appropriate is good. Good for sure. Special makes it sound like you've got a competitive advantage that absolutely no one can replicate" (Participant 12). In line with this description, another participant spoke about being drawn to both descriptions of being ordinary and special, in that they felt in life you may function as ordinary, however in business you often have to function as extraordinary or special in order to succeed.

Only one participant referred to themselves as 'ordinary' in response to this reflection, however they also referred to their actions being extraordinary. The participant stated "I think I'm just an ordinary person doing an extraordinary thing. The big thing is that people think you have to be extraordinary to be able to follow your dream or run a business and that sort of thing but that's not true" (Participant 2). Figure 1 below highlights the separation when it comes to self vs business, and the frequency in terms of responses in both aspects.

**Figure 1: The separation of responses regarding self and business/entrepreneur version**



It is interesting to note that there was clarity when referring to their businesses or their 'entrepreneur versions', however there were more mixed feelings when it came to responding as themselves.

To further establish the prevalence of traits related to the inflated positive view of self, participants were asked to reflect on whether they felt they were good at selling



themselves and/or their businesses. Half of the participants confidently stated that they were indeed very good at selling themselves and their businesses. One of the participants explained how sales are at “*the core of success*” (Participant 3) and thus the ability to sell was practical as an entrepreneur. Contrary to the above, some participants expressed their challenges with their ability to sell. Some participants indicated their areas of concern when it comes to sales, which were based on losing the ability to add a personal touch to whatever they are trying to sell, while another participant stated the changing markets and the fact that things are changing rapidly as a key reason why they are doubting their sales’ abilities. Table 6 below summarizes the responses related to the confidence around the ability to sell.

**Table 6: Summary related to confidence around the ability to sell**

Participants	Quotes	Summary of findings from the quotes
5	<i>“I’m a strategist so yes. I can package anything. I can sell rice to Chinese people.”</i>	High confidence around the ability to sell based on experience and successes, which has developed an inflated positive view of self
8	<i>“My personality traits allow me to easily do my job. It requires a lot of patience, it requires me being in spaces with people I’ve never met or people I don’t know, and trying to convince them to buy into my idea or into my business.”</i>	
4	<i>“I can sell them my vision. and I’ve seen people sometimes believe in my vision more than I do”</i>	
2	<i>“My strongest skill to start off is sales. I can sell. I do sell myself well and I sell the business well.”</i>	

5	<p><i>“When it comes down to scale, and I lose the personal ability to convince, I find sometimes I doubt myself. I doubt my ability. I doubt the desirability of what I’m offering.”</i></p>	
11	<p>One participant specifically declared their outright weakness in terms of sales, stating <i>“Sales is my weak point. And that’s more a personality thing than a competence thing – I don’t like people”</i></p>	<p>Challenges and lack of confidence around ability to sell based on experienced discomfort and failures</p>

Other questions within this sub-section aimed to understand the relationship participants have with decision-making and how they felt about the decisions they’ve made as entrepreneurs. Again, with the aim of establishing the levels of confidence and the view of self. When asked if they felt they always knew what they were doing as well as enquiring on the frequency of their bad decisions, most participants responded with humour and initial laughter, implying it was fairly impossible to know what you are doing and to avoid making bad decisions as an entrepreneur. When responding to how often they made bad decisions, participants cheerfully expressed “A lot, too often”; “All the time”; “Almost all the time, it’s a default”. Participants further expressed the significance of bad decisions, expressing how bad decisions often reflected an entrepreneur’s willingness to explore and try new things.

Participants were asked to respond to a phrase that encourages them to reflect on whether they had been negatively impacted by their own overconfidence. Most participants expressed that they had, implying that they did indeed function on overconfidence. One participant justified the importance of this overconfidence, stating *“in order to keep executing these highly unlikely ideas, you have to have a level of confidence that’s not normal. You have to believe that your highly unlikely idea is going to work” (Participant 11)*. Very few of the participants indicated otherwise, and expressed that they are naturally not overconfident, rather referring to themselves more as “calculating” or as “a sceptic”.

In summary, it seems that while the ‘inflated positive view of self’ trait was indeed present, there were interesting complexities and insights related to this trait. On one end, there seems to be a reality of entrepreneurs learning to function as themselves,

and as their entrepreneur selves when in business, which often means exuding overconfidence and an inflated sense of self that represents this specific trait. There is further complexity in that there were often mixed feelings in terms of expressing high levels of self-confidence, with participants often bouncing between expressing very high levels of confidence based on their own experiences, while also expressing their doubts and lack of confidence in some parts as well.

#### 5.4.2 Self-enhancement

The questions in this sub-section of the interview schedule aimed to establish the prevalence of those traits highlighted as representing the narcissistic trait of ‘self-enhancement’. These traits represent the importance of maintaining and enhancing a positive self-view, the practice of seeking attention and taking credit from others, having low empathy, as well as the willingness to take risks.

Participants were asked to indicate their feelings towards receiving compliments in line with establishing the need to attract attention. More of the participants expressed their appreciation of compliments, emphasizing emotions such as pride, encouragement, and gratitude among others when stating how compliments made them feel, while also highlighting how compliments built up their self-belief and made them feel valued. The feelings around compliments seemingly indicate a deeper meaning that is placed on the receipt of compliments, as participants often expressed the deeper need for appreciation so as to entice motivation, not necessarily for the purposes of self-enhancement.

A few of the participants felt differently about compliments, highlighting their difficulty with compliments as they felt “weird” receiving them as they were not used to them. One participant expressed how compliments put them under pressure instead of making them feel positive. While the bulk of the feedback on compliments was positive, Table 7 below summarizes the overall sentiment around compliments.

**Table 7: Positives and negative responses to receiving compliments – quotation summaries**

Enjoying Compliments	Challenge with compliments
<i>“I feel quite proud. It’s one of those things, you’ve had dream and for people to acknowledge that you’ve done something” (Participant 2)</i>	<i>“I mean, you acknowledge it, but again, it’s just about, I know that this business could be bigger and that we could be doing some</i>

<p><i>"I feel good. It Makes me happy. It's encouraging. It Pushes you to just keep on going and not give up." (Participant 10)</i></p> <p><i>"It's a confidence booster. I think the main thing is that you're confident to go and sell to other people, that's the big thing. you're confident that what you offer is legit." (Participant 12)</i></p>	<p><i>dynamic stuff and I just don't feel that we are" (Participant 1)</i></p>
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Participants were then asked to consider how they handle people in terms of getting them to align with them, or to get them to do what they want them to do. This was linked to establishing levels of empathy, as well as the practicality of enhancing the positive self-view, an important part of self-enhancement. Some participants responded positively to the question, indicating that they found it easy to get people to do what they want. One participant stated *"I think it's quite easy because I'm actually quite persuasive and I can sell myself quite well"* (Participant 2); while another participant reiterated this thought, stating *"[It is] Very easy. You just have to get them to share in the vision and what it is you are seeking, and they buy into it; and you have to be inspirational. So, it's not a difficult thing for me because I think that's where I'm gifted. It forms part of my character I did not have to learn to be the person I am"* (Participant 3).

Other participants expressed challenges and frustrations when it came to getting people to do what they want. One participant stated *"People are strange because not everyone will get things the way you want them to do it because you have a different picture and the next person has a different picture"* (Participant 4). This participant highlighted a key insight, that there was an expectation for alignment already whereas in reality that is not what they experienced. In reiterating this sentiment, other participants expressed their self-doubt, with one stating they have to take the stance of *"thinking outside of my head in terms of knowing that people can have different ways in which they interpret your command or your ideas or strategy."* (Participant 1). In line with this challenge with people's interpretations of one's vision, one participant also expressed their challenges with handling people, stating *"I expect people to operate like me, and that's unrealistic and not fair as I've been told. Sometimes it's really hard because it's so difficult for me to articulate things on paper or in words, but I can see it in my mind, and I can do it myself."* (Participant 8).

In another question within the 'self-enhancement' sub-section, participants had the opportunity to reflect on their considerations around manipulation. The aim was to establish whether they possessed the traits of manipulation, and also whether they found this trait necessary, in attempts to understand levels of empathy associated with self-enhancement. Many participants indicated their difficulty with manipulation, citing issues such as dishonesty, discomfort and mistrust as key concerns. The negative nature of manipulation was also described as a dishonest way of doing business, while others expressed it more as their weak point in terms of business practices.

While some of the participants described manipulation in a negative light, others expressed the necessity of manipulation in business, while also reflecting on how they find the practice of manipulation easy. The ease of manipulation was also highlighted by one participant who further reasoned by explaining the ideal scenario of ensuring all parties gain. The view is that manipulation is more practical than anything, and forms a part of business practice.

The discussions around the practicality of manipulation seem to highlight the importance of viewing manipulation not in isolation, but as a way to get what you want out of business. There seemed to be a likening to the process of manipulation to other functions possibly such as marketing or sales, other key business processes. The awareness of their own experience with manipulation that includes some negative outcomes for some is key to note in further exploring the prevalence of the 'self-enhancement' trait. There also seems to likely be an indication of low empathy, as the separation of emotions with regards to the impact on others was often dismissed. Table 8 below summarizes the complex relationship participants had with manipulation.

**Table 8: The complexity of manipulation in summary**

<b>Difficulty with manipulation</b>	<b>Necessity of manipulation</b>	<b>Ease of manipulation</b>
<p><i>"when it comes to dealing with people the manipulation will always catch up [to] you. I would rather be honest" (Participant 4)</i></p> <p><i>"what I know in my job of building brands is that in the</i></p>	<p><i>"...having to manipulate people towards seeing something that is of benefit to them is subjective because we use manipulation, the word, to only talk about the bad side of it. But [manipulation] is also about convincing, where I</i></p>	<p><i>"It's easy for me because my manipulation is based on [a] win-win scenario. It's never based on a win-lose, or based on me just receiving and the other person getting nothing. It's very easy but it</i></p>

<p><i>long term [manipulation] backfires. So, I don't like to do it. it makes me feel uncomfortable..." (Participant 5).</i></p> <p><i>"[Manipulation is] my weakness – I don't know how to manipulate people. I know how to close deals, but I don't know how to manipulate, or influence the deal to be on my side. It's not in my nature." (Participant 9</i></p>	<p><i>have to present stuff a certain way." (Participant 5).</i></p> <p><i>"I think the nature of work is that you have to manipulate. And the nature of sales is that you have to manipulate" (Participant 12).</i></p> <p><i>"Manipulating people is an art that I haven't achieved yet. I'm trying to figure that out. But it's definitely a skill one should access." (Participant 6).</i></p>	<p><i>takes some form of finesse to be able to come to the understanding of a win-win." (Participant 7</i></p> <p><i>"Manipulation is a part of business and life and sometimes we do it to the detriment of others and sometimes you gotta do what you gotta do" (Participant 3).</i></p>
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In order to gauge the participants' thoughts around the importance and impact of their own experiences, they were asked to consider if they felt people enjoyed hearing their stories. There were mixed reactions when participants were asked a question that allowed them to consider whether actively maintaining a positive image of themselves for the purposes of external validation motivated them in any way. While there was a unanimous response in terms of participants' believing that people enjoyed hearing their stories, some participants expressed their struggles in terms of relaying their own stories, citing exhaustion at telling the same story constantly as an issue.

The main responses however, centered around the ability of the participants' stories to act as an inspiration to others. Most participants reflected on the difficulties of their entrepreneurial journey and how they had survived and succeeded, and considered this as a key reason people enjoy experiencing their stories. The crafting of one's own narrative came out as an important part of their journey. Table 9 below summarizes this sentiment around the importance of narratives.

**Table 9: The importance of personal narratives**

Participants	Quotes	Summary of findings from the quotes
4	<i>"...it's an inspirational story – I came from nothing...People want to see people who look like them doing well as it increases their own belief in themselves"</i>	Narratives as inspiration in the entrepreneurial journey
2	<i>"Yes – they love it. I think it's inspiring. In some part of every person, I think entrepreneurship is one of those things where it's universal. A lot of people have the dream to be an entrepreneur even though some of them might never do it or step into that arena and actually pursue it. but a lot of people love the story of someone who actually made it"</i>	
6	<i>"People invest in people and not just ideas or concepts. People want to see other people grow. There is an importance about one's stories...It can be personal, it can be the business journey, it can be the ups and downs, people are interested because seemingly you are still active in what you are doing and you haven't given up"</i>	

In taking time to reflect on this question it seems the participants found that their journey of entrepreneurship is important to share in detail so as to influence and inspire others, some for the purposes of pure inspiration, and others for business purposes. One participant reflected further on the importance of stories and directly linked the telling of their stories to an important part of the business process, stating "*...an important part of selling is your ability to tell relevant stories...A lot of times, let's say investors even, they want to know what your story is. As long as your product works, what separates you is the story. Stories are important in order to sell. Sometimes the story is what warms the sale.*" (Participant 12).

The questions ending off this sub-section were around risk, with the aim of establishing the prevalence of another key trait linked to ‘self-enhancement’. This allowed the participants to reflect on their own journeys and whether they consider themselves risk-takers, as well as what that has meant for them in reality. Most of the participants proudly considered themselves to be risk-takers, with one participant even stating “*Yes I am [a risk-taker], big time*”. Participants often expressed how they were willing to take risks to achieve their vision. They indicated that the idea of failure, of unplanned outcomes, and of risk was part of the journey to achieving what they are meant to achieve. Furthermore, participants highlighted that experience and exploring were key to risk-taking, with participants’ emphasizing the willingness to take risks in order to achieve very clear goals and visions for themselves and their businesses.

Some of the participants’ though, spoke cautiously about their risk-taking, and considered the importance of calculating and understanding risk. Another participant referred to the idea of being aware of when risks made sense as an entrepreneur, and the importance of the awareness of good risks and bad risks. What has been interesting through the participants’ responses in relation to risk is the overall idea of accepting the reality of unplanned outcomes, with the understanding that the outcomes will yield a positive and likely planned end-result. The constant move between comfort and discomfort was expressed as an important part of embracing being a risk-taker and therefore an entrepreneur, with the idea of risk-taking being linked inextricably to the practice of entrepreneurship. Table 10 below summarizes the participants’ thoughts around risk as a necessity, and as something that should be practiced with caution.

**Table 10: Sentiments around risk-taking as an entrepreneur**

Participants	Quotes	Summary of findings from the quotes
10	<i>“I am willing to lose money in order to try something new. Invest in something and give it a try. See how it works. I am willing to sacrifice a lot of things in order to make sure my vision has been seen or noticed”</i>	
4	<i>“These things have happened like this – where we start something with no plan and no idea, and we just start even though we think it might fail, but we are okay with it because</i>	



11	<p><i>we've explored. I am a risk taker in that form – I'm okay with starting something with no plan and exploring"</i></p> <p><i>"If you're going to do this entrepreneurship thing, you can't make rational decisions. You have to do the irrational thing. You have to make the riskier decision. Do the thing that is likely to fail than to succeed. It's the only way to do entrepreneurship"</i></p>	<p>Risk as a necessity in the practice entrepreneurship</p>
5  12	<p><i>"In parts, yes [I am a risk-taker]. I have my moments. I don't think it's a consistent state of being for me. It's a state I need to be in at certain parts and I'm learning to leverage the cycles. You can't just live with risk. You can't just risk it all"</i></p> <p><i>"You can say you're a risk-taker but you also should know what risk you can take, [and] should take. What is a bad risk, what's a good one. What can you carry and what [you] can't. You can say you're a risk taker, and I may have an appetite for risk, but it doesn't mean I don't know what risk is. You have to separate being a risk-taker and being irresponsible. A person that's irresponsible does not know that risk of what they are doing."</i></p>	<p>The importance of cautionary behaviour around risk even as an entrepreneur</p>

In summary, attempting to establish the prevalence of the 'self-enhancement' trait brought about insights around the nuances to the entrepreneurial personality linked to this trait. Mixed feelings were expressed in relation to most of the traits including the active pursuit of attention and empathy for others which was elaborated on through ideas around manipulation and the practice of handling others. Taking credit did not come up as prevalent among the participants, while risk-taking was established not only as highly prevalent, but also as necessary. The motivation to maintain and enhance the positive self-view, a key part of self-enhancement, was overall described as prevalent. This was implied through the practices described by participants in relation to experiences related to enhancing opportunities for business, as well as the power of actions that drive self-enhancement such as the receipt of compliments. New insights were gained through the discussion of the importance and power of narratives in the entrepreneurial journey, as well as what seems to be connections and links

between the identified traits. More specifically for example, frustrations related to aligning with people often related to entrepreneurs expecting others to behave and think like them, implying a link to the previous trait 'an inflated positive view of self'.

### 5.4.3 Superiority

The questions in this sub-section of the interview schedule aimed to establish insights around the prevalence of the traits associated with the narcissistic trait of superiority. Participants were initially asked questions to establish their feelings towards authority and hierarchy, and also to establish if they preferred a role of authority or preferred to rather follow orders. Responses from participants varied, with some participants highlighting the importance of authority and hierarchy, while others expressed their disdain of it. Figure 2 visually illustrates the split in the sample.

**Figure 2: Sentiment towards Authority and Hierarchy**



The participants who expressed an appreciation of authority and hierarchy highlighted both as practical considerations for the running of a business, citing such advantages as consistency, compliance and responsibility as key outputs. Some of the participants also expressed how authority and hierarchy provide structure and are important for accountability: *"In my own company I've realized that you have to have set roles and people that have to be accountable at every stage. And it's important because otherwise you can't get anything efficiently done"* (Participant 2). Another participant emphasized the need for accountability and supported the desired output of efficiency, stating *"I think they are critical. But how you structure them is important, but it's critical. There needs to be accountability in any organization, and so, I don't think you can run an organization effectively without accountability. But how you build accountability is also quite relevant. And what authority looks like"* (Participant 12). Figure 3 below illustrates the outcomes based on operationalizing authority and hierarchy as per the participants' responses.

**Figure 3: Link between Authority & Hierarchy and Efficiency**



A few of the participants expressed their dislike of authority and hierarchy, often citing their own personal experiences as indications of their reasoning. Expressing issues around power struggles and the unnecessary need for those in power to exert their power over others was highlighted by some of the participants, with one participant stating that “...*position isn’t everything*” (Participant 3).

In the question related to gauging whether participants preferred having authority or following orders, those participants who highlighted their dislike of authority, are those that also spoke about not preferring either of the given options. One participant explained: “...*you can’t have authority over people because it takes a team to do what we do*” (Participant 8), highlighting their preference for focusing on collaborating with their teams, and this was reiterated by the other participant who stated “*I prefer neither – I like it better when people think we are on same level.*” (Participant 3). One of the participants spoke about not preferring either of the options because of their preference to not manage people, stating “*Oh goodness, [I prefer] neither. Because I’m a creative I don’t want to have to manage people. Actually, if you were to ask me what I hate the most in the work that I do, I hate having to manage people*” (Participant 2).

Beyond this, most participants responded by expressing that they preferred authority instead of following orders, with some stating that they choose having authority simply

because they don't like following orders, and another stating that they prefer authority because they are clear about what they want to do and achieve, they just need the help to achieve their vision. One of the participants reiterated this thought around the importance of their vision: "*I prefer having authority because of the vision I have and the position I play*" (Participant 6).

When responding to questions around understanding how they felt about their authority not being recognized, there were also mixed responses. A few of the participants expressed the frustrations of this experience, with some explaining how difficult it was to ignore or to take lightly. Other participants referred to having to deal with things immediately when their authority was not recognized, with one participant specifically emphasizing the issue around the costs of this occurrence in terms of the business' outputs, citing the negative impact monetarily on their business.

The next question encouraged participants to consider their journey of leadership on their entrepreneurial journey, and express whether they indeed enjoyed leadership. The aim of this question was to gain insights around the participants' connection to leadership and authority in relation to the superiority trait. Some of the participants expressed that they indeed enjoyed leadership, and reasoned by explaining how leadership provides them the opportunity to fulfil their visions, to assume responsibility, and to be in control. They also expressed how they enjoyed carving out their lives based on their own goals and visions, and seeing that come to fruition. Other participants struggled to reconcile the frustrations they have experienced as entrepreneurs, and which ultimately tainted their view of the leadership experience. Some of the participants described their experience of leadership using phrases such as "tiresome", "tedious", and "stressful". Participants often referred to the responsibility of an entrepreneur, and expressed their frustration with having to answer to and for everything. One participant elaborated on the anxiety that comes with being an entrepreneur, while another expressed how they had fallen into the position of being a leader of their own organization because of the goal they had, while they had not entirely prepared for it. Table 11 below summarizes some of the key thoughts around leadership.

**Table 11: Enjoyment of and frustration with Leadership**

Enjoying Leadership	Frustration with Leadership
<p><i>"I enjoy the position I am at because it's one that I built for myself it's almost like life be design... (Participant 3)</i></p>	<p><i>"Everything is your fault, and that's not enjoyable" (Participant 11).</i></p>
<p><i>"I enjoy it because I get to see all the hard work unfold at the hands of the business; I get to see the execution of everything come to life effectively and smoothly." (Participant 7)</i></p>	<p><i>"It looks great from the outside. From the inside – it's a constant worry... Sometimes I want to get time off from it" (Participant 4).</i></p>
<p><i>"I enjoy being responsible for creating and developing solutions. Being the leader also means you are ultimately responsible for finding solutions to problems. And I enjoy that ultimate responsibility and the challenge that comes with that. Those are the main things I enjoy." (Participant 12)</i></p>	<p><i>"It wasn't a conscious decision to do this and I wasn't aware of what it took. I am often bruised. It's great and not great... there's a lot of sacrifice. I have become the odd one out. Also, for me because of the perceived success at an early age, you get to lose friends. You don't fit in. it's a hectic psychological nightmare." (Participant 6).</i></p>

These discussions started to highlight the dichotomous relationship that some of the participants have with the concept of leadership and power when it comes to their own experience. In trying to understand whether leadership and power played a motivating role on their entrepreneurial journeys, participants were tasked with reflecting on their leadership experience to establish whether the position of leadership actually matters to them. Most of the entrepreneurs expressed that they were indeed motivated by their position of leadership. Participants reasoned by expressing the significance of their vision being realised and the importance of the responsibility placed on them to be leaders. Others expressed how their motivation comes indirectly from being able to drive their own vision forward. The dominant themes related to motivation through leadership, responsibility and the ability to fulfil their own visions were emphasized consistently by participants. What is also consistent is the participant's feelings towards leadership serving as a link to the fulfilment of their dreams and goals, while also having the ability to impact others.

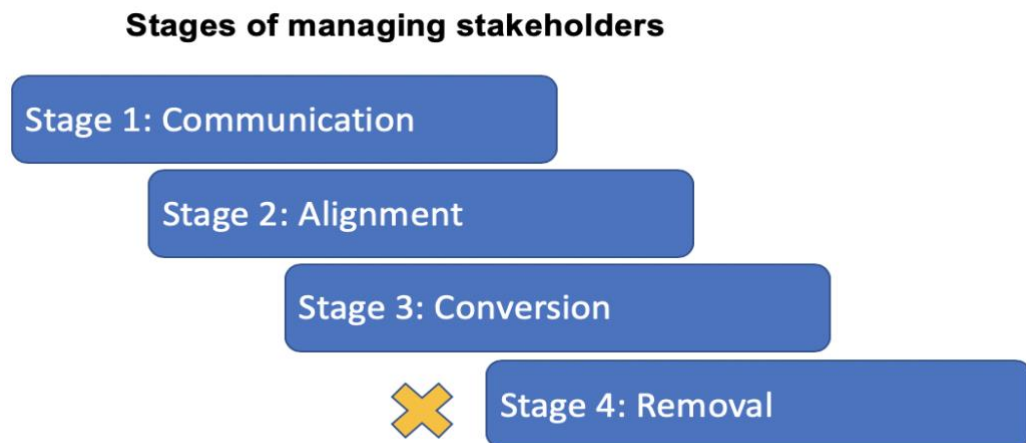
The next group of questions in the sub-section aimed to establish how the participants

handled and managed stakeholders, more specifically when they were struggling with alignment issues or people going against what they want them to do, with the aim of understanding the power dynamic. A key consideration that was applicable across most of the participants was around the importance of communication when it came to managing stakeholders, whether internal or external. Several participants expressed how it was important to deal with any issues immediately, and ensure there are open lines of communication so as to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Some of the participants expressed their frustration when it comes to managing stakeholders, especially in terms of difficulties with alignment, a frustration that also came up in discussing the self-enhancement trait. An interesting insight was found in participants often referring to their ideal that their stakeholders should think and behave like them. This was another frustration that was previously highlighted. Expressing the frustration of stakeholders not aligning and not being clear on the vision was a common discussion with participants. One participant elaborated on this issue: “...it’s a *thinker’s dilemma*, as an intellectual who over-reads and gets stuff, I get a level of impatience when people don’t get it” (Participant 5). Another participant expressed the simplicity of their frustrations, stating “I think not everyone is going to think like you and I think that’s where my frustration comes.” (Participant 1).

While some participants expressed the understanding around the importance of communication and making the effort to align stakeholders, some indicated that at some point, they don’t continue trying to align people, and would rather get rid of those who are not aligned. One participant stated “[Managing stakeholders] *has been the hardest thing to do. If we are not aligned, because I’m the only owner, it’s easier for me to fire or get rid of those people who don’t agree and are not aligned*” (Participant 2). In similar vein, another participant supported this thinking, stating that if one takes the time to communicate and clarify and stakeholders still don’t align, then they would consider that there is an issue of insubordination, something they would have to deal with swiftly. Figure 4 below illustrates the stages of managing stakeholders as described by participants, with stage 4 – removal- being the stage that only comes into play when alignment and conversion has not taken place as preferred. This interestingly links strongly to discussions around the prevalence of low-empathy when describing narcissistic traits within entrepreneurs, and it further highlights the commonality around the links and overlaps between the identified traits.

**Figure 4: The process of managing stakeholders**



All participants aligned on the difficulty of handling teams and managing stakeholders, and while some felt it important to express the frustrations of having to get people to align for the purpose of moving forward, most emphasized that the key to handling people is to communicate, and communicate constantly.

The last question in this sub-section was based on further understanding the power dynamic of the participants, and they were asked to consider whether they were micro-managers or macro-managers. Most of the participants quickly responded and said they were macro-managers, based on them delegating often and having a preference to have their team members taking responsibility and be accountable for their own work. A few of the participants hesitated when expressing that they preferred to micro-manage. The participants referred to their finicky nature as a reason, and one even indicated that when they don't micro-manage they get anxiety. In referring to their preferences, one of the participants expressed that they do micro-manage conditionally, and this has to do with them micro-managing work that they actually enjoy, while another expressed the same sentiment but it was more related to setting the standards initially.

Understanding the reasons behind why participants had preferred styles of management was important to uncover so as to further establish the intricacies of the superiority trait as it applies to the sample. The superiority was established as prevalent, with complexities existing in the reasons related to the prevalence. The importance of authority, power and control was in most parts related to the opportunity to realize visions, take responsibility for others, while also being able to take control of

their own plans. Further links were established among the identified traits with an inflated positive view of self being implied in discussions related to expectations of others, with participants again expressing the wish that others could think and behave like them. Low empathy was also expressed in relation to how entrepreneurs deal with those not aligning with their visions and plans.

#### **5.4.4 Entitlement**

The questions in this sub-section aimed to deeply understand if the trait of entitlement plays a role and is relevant to the participants based on their journeys. The participants were challenged to really reflect on their own personality traits and to understand why they feel the way they do about the aspects of entitlement discussed.

The first few questions in this sub-section dealt with understanding the relationship the participants had with the practice of respect and being respected. When asked if the participants believed they got the respect that they deserved, there was often hesitation in terms of trying to understand who the desired respect was in reference to.

Participants were also asked to consider who it is they expect to get respect from. Some of the participants expressed that they commanded respect through their conduct. One participant elaborated, *“I play my role and play it to the best of my ability. I make sure there is no loophole to disrespect” (Participant 7)*. Other participants spoke more about respect being reciprocated, and emphasized the importance of doing their part and being respectful, as they would then receive the respect they deserve. One participant stated *“Respect is about giving it in order to receive. It’s about being professional constantly. Be clear about what you want. Treat others as equals. That way you get what you want.” (Participant 10)*. Another participant illustrated the giving of respect through their experience of providing value, stating *“From a business perspective, getting the respect that you deserve is about showing the value that you put in. The biggest thing in this space as an entrepreneur – and it’s critical – is about selling your services – so what’s critical is that you need to be very clear about where and how you add value” (Participant 12)*.

Some of the participants were specific about their frustrations with not getting respect from the industries they are in. Participants referred to struggles within their industries in relation to competition that has resulted in them believing that they don’t get the respect that they deserve. Some participants expressed that they felt they needed to put themselves on platforms in order to become popular and get respect, while another participant spoke about how the challenging competitive environment has resulted in



animosity within their environment, and thus they don't get the respect they believe they deserve.

A few of the participants expressed that they did not need or look for any respect, and instead focused on other more important parts of their business. One participant stated, *"It's a situation where I don't look for [respect], so someone could disrespect me but I'm not there for that, I'm normally just doing what I do and I don't pay any mind to it."* (Participant 6). Another participant reiterated the lack of control one has in terms of ensuring they get respect, stating *"How people treat you and react to you is really not up to you. So, whether people respect me or not, as long as I'm happy I'm good."* (Participant 9). One participant expressed that their confidence was not affected by respect or lack thereof, stating *"I've come to not have to depend on their respect to acknowledge that I'm good at what I do"* (Participant 8).

The next question asked to consider whether they had high expectations of others. The response was almost identical in nature, in that most of the participants expressed that they had very high expectations of other people, mostly due to the high expectations they have of themselves. One participant summarized their thoughts about what they expect from other people and the reasoning, stating *"There are more easier ways to make a living and to spend your time. There are easier decisions to make than what we do. So, if I'm going to do – make these set of decisions, take these set of risks, spend all these hours, then I expect everyone involved whether internal or external to match my level of seriousness"* (Participant 11). The importance of alignment and effort was expressed throughout the sample of participants, even though some of the participants expressed that while they had high expectations, they also expected to be disappointed. However, this did not stop them from continuing to put the pressure they put on themselves on others.

Questions related to aiming to understanding how participants handle changes and deal with adjustments to their plans were next in the sub-section, and responses to this were quite mixed. About half the participants found it easy to change course, while the other half found it difficult. Those participants who found it difficult expressed that that they often have had very clear visions for a long period, and are often backed by sound research and a strong understanding of their markets and their potential. Thus, changing course is often difficult as they are fixated on a specific plan that they want to see come to life, however reality sometimes does not support that vision. Some of the participants were aligned to the realities of this type of circumstance, and expressed

how they found it easy to change course. One participant even explained how it is important to change course: *“One thing I learnt early on in my business is that if I have a vision of something and whatever I was doing at the time is not getting me to that vision, I shift and shift quickly. Because if you don’t shift quickly you get stuck and it takes longer for you to shift” (Participant 2)*. Another participant supported this notion, stating *“I’m not married to a set of actions or outcomes. I’m married to the idea that we must do the things that will be better in the long term than things that are going to be worse in the long term.” (Participant 11)*. While the participants reflected on their varied reactions to changes in their plans, they mostly aligned on the strength of their visions, with some illustrating more flexibility than others when it comes to actively making changes in order to reach their desired outcomes.

In another question within the sub-section, participants had to consider their reactions to feedback when it comes to their businesses. Participants introduced complexities in relation to feedback, as well as hierarchies in terms of which feedback they take seriously and which they don’t. Some of the participants spoke strongly about the importance of feedback, elaborating on the fact that they found feedback to be helpful in terms of guiding them, helping them to grow personally and in business, and in terms of helping them improve. Some of the participants spoke about how they purposely source feedback and create an environment where they are constantly receiving feedback, again for the purposes of growing and improving.

Some of the participants however, reflected on the challenges they have with feedback, mostly based on who it came from. One participant elaborated on their skepticism, stating *“you learn a lot from people that are within your space yes, but I think also think there are certain people that are outside that don’t know what goes on inside your industry but they tend to advise you which doesn’t help” (Participant 9)*. Another participant continued in support of this thought, *“I take good feedback from people who have proven themselves and who I am inspired by. People who are more successful than me. But not from people with no experience. They must have substance. I can’t just take rubbish from a person who is giving me advice but doesn’t even run one business. Who are they to be telling me anything?” (Participant 3)*. The importance of balancing out feedback that is received and making sure to be open while being clear about what is useful and what is not came out strongly in the discussions around feedback. Thoughts around who’s feedback matters were also emphasized. Overall, while feedback was appreciated, participants did highlight the importance of clarifying the intention behind the feedback as well as whether the feedback is constructive.

In summary, the 'entitlement' trait was seemingly prevalent among the participants, even though there were some mixed feelings around aspects such as the need for respect as well as challenges around revising their visions. The dominating sentiment was linked to having feelings of entitlement around their visions and goals, high expectations of their teams, and the expectation that actions command respect. Also, as found in other discussions around other traits, the overlap continues with entitlement seemingly being centered again around high confidence and an inflated sense of self, with entrepreneurs expressing the expectation that others should act and think like them, and should have the same motivation and drive as them. This further highlights the connectivity among the identified narcissistic traits while also showing their prevalence.

#### **5.4.5 Exhibitionism**

The last of the sub-sections in relation to establishing the prevalence of the identified narcissistic traits was one that seemed to have caused quite a bit of debate due to participants finding the discussions around exhibitionist traits challenging and complex based on their own experiences as established entrepreneurs. Participants were asked how they felt about receiving a lot of attention, a key outcome of exhibitionism. Most of the participants interestingly expressed their challenges with receiving attention. Challenges around being shy, having to psyche themselves up, getting annoyed and feeling weird were expressed. There was also elaboration around actively avoiding attention.

While only one participant expressed that they enjoyed attention, others gave insight into the type of attention they prefer. These participants highlighted that attention needs to be related to, or assist with gaining clientele for it to matter. The appreciation of attention directly linked to work was a consistent theme that emerged among several of the entrepreneurs and this thinking has also had an impact on their journeys as entrepreneurs.

Participants were then tasked with considering whether they found it important that people recognized their work, which would reflect on the motivation to exhibit. Several discussions around the complexities of recognition were introduced here. Some participants took time to reflect on what recognition meant for them, with them concluding that recognition meant referrals.

Other participants spoke about recognition as an important part of their personal development, describing entrepreneurs as people who thrive on recognition. Some

participants then spoke about recognition for their work being important because it shows the impact they have made. Other participants described recognition as a form of success, and questioned why an entrepreneur would be doing the work they do if they don't get recognized, especially by the people they are catering for through their businesses.

Some participants started to separate the importance of recognition based on whether it was for themselves or for their work. The same was done when discussing showing off as well as highlighting achievements. The emphasis on not being linked to the recognition was a sentiment shared by many of the participants, who often expressed their disinterest in being the face of the business. Furthermore, the importance of recognition for the purposes of increasing clientele was emphasized by several participants, citing the function of recognition as similar to that of branding and marketing. Using recognition as a form of business development was expressed as critical for most of the participants. Table 12 summarizes the key take-outs related to the importance of recognition.

**Table 12: Summary of the importance of recognition**

Participants	Quotes	Summary of findings from the quotes
11	<i>"It's important that people recognize the work, it's not important that they know it was me. it's important that people acknowledge the output – I don't need to be linked. It's not important that people know that it's me."</i>	Importance of recognition for work vs self
2	<i>"It's not important for me that I'm the main person though. I am usually in the background. I'm not like other designers where I make it about myself, most people don't even know who owns [my company]."</i>	
7	<i>"There's a lot of fame seeking within [my industry]. Personally, I'm like a ghost within the industry, you never know when I was there, because I never want to sell my face or my name, I want to sell the business."</i>	

5	<p><i>“My businesses have recognition at the centre. You’re choosing, you’re buying, you’re giving me money, you’re referring, you’re giving us the work, that’s the recognition.”</i></p>	
6	<p><i>“Putting a name behind my work and making sure my work gets recognized has been a great business strategy for me in the sense that I need to be able to just wait for a call and it comes”</i></p>	Importance of recognition for increasing clientele
12	<p><i>“As an entrepreneur the biggest compliment is a referral. Telling me I’m great doesn’t mean anything to me. the biggest compliment is you making an order; it’s you referring me. Referrals for an entrepreneur are massive. That’s absolutely the biggest compliment you can ever pay.”</i></p>	

In responding to the next group of questions that aimed to gauge how participants felt about showing off as well as highlighting achievements, similar thinking prevailed in this discussion. Some participants spoke about the importance of aligning the highlighting of achievements to sourcing work or clients, and having a strategic outlook to highlighting achievements, or showing off. In general, most of the participants found difficulty with the concept of highlighting one’s own achievements, even though in reality they have likely had to do it for the purposes of sourcing business. In elaborating on this conundrum, some participants expressed how they found more value in getting authentic recognition. Gaining recognition organically seemed to be viewed as an achievement to some participants, who felt it was even more satisfying when recognition is authentic instead of staged. One participant stated *“I feel that if it’s a real achievement, it will naturally announce itself to the world. it will be an organic thing.”* (Participant 7). In line with the need for organic and authentic recognition, some of the participants also expressed the importance of their work speaking for itself. These participants expressed a reliance on their output as the avenue to gain recognition, instead of relying on selling themselves. There was a preference for ensuring that value is brought about through the work produced, which will likely guarantee more clients due to the meaningful contribution one has made in terms of the actual work they have done and not what they are promising.

The last question in this sub-section was asked in order to understand how much getting recognition and praise played a motivating role for the participants. Responses to this were also complex, with participants introducing several layers to discussions around this kind of motivation. Some of the participants expressed how they viewed recognition and praise positively as it motivated them on their journey. Participants referred to recognition and praise as ways in which one can gauge that they are on the right path, that they are doing the right kind of work, and they are motivated to work harder and do even more. One participant referred to the human need for validation that they experience in this regard, stating “...as a human being it does [motivate me]. I have an ego like everyone else, and being told you’re amazing is awesome” (Participant 12). This participant elaborated further, “Those things are important – they make you work hard so that you get the standing ovation that you’re looking for”.

Another participant expressed how recognition and praise are motivational because they make the environment for business easier: “As a person I know that if somebody feels good about me and my work then things are easier and much better than you having to always prove yourself. It’s easier to achieve when the energy and space is conducive for that” (Participant 6). The idea around recognition and praise helping with business has been introduced previously, and continues to be a key insight that was emphasized often throughout the interview process.

Contrary to the above, some of the participants felt differently and didn’t feel motivated by external recognition and praise, rather looking to themselves for the validation they needed. Interestingly, some participants expressed that they had in fact previously been motivated by the outputs, however as they grow older and with more experience they found that they were motivated less by what others feel about their work and by receiving applause. One participant expressed this change, “I mean probably at the beginning, yes [I was motivated]. But there comes a point where you just don’t care what people think; you know what you can bring to the table” (Participant 9). The main reasons expressed by participants who felt they weren’t motivated by recognition and praise were that they were now motivated by other things, whether passion, their vision, or actually executing their plans. Participants also expressed that while they weren’t motivated by recognition and praise, this did not exclude the importance of these two factors in terms of them thriving as entrepreneurs.

One of the participants expressed the caution around the idea of not being motivated by recognition and praise based on their own experiences, implying that validation from

others is an important and necessary part of the business process. This participant elaborated, *“I’ve realized that the only person I am trying to get validation from is me, which is not necessarily good. I feel that you have to move from a space of autonomy in order to actually thrive as an entrepreneur.”* (Participant 1).

In summary, the exhibitionist trait is seemingly prevalent, however the complexity comes in the insights around how the trait comes into play practically. Most of the discussions related to exhibitionism centred around a separation of what seemed to be the authentic self, from the entrepreneur self. Exhibitionism was also often referred to as an important part of business practice, and a way in which to source, reach and keep clients.

## **5.5 Results for Research Question 2**

**Research question 2:** How are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) perceived to positively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?

For the purpose of answering research question 2, the following constructs are discussed under each sub-heading: An inflated positive view of self, self-enhancement, superiority, entitlement, and exhibitionism.

This research question aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how the identified narcissistic traits were perceived to have positively influenced the participants’ entrepreneurial journey. The research question also aimed to establish new insights with regards to the positive experience of established entrepreneurs in terms of how individual personality traits have played a role on their journey, and also which of the traits seemed to have a higher positive influence and impact.

Participants were asked to discuss if and how the identified narcissistic traits had positively influenced their entrepreneurial journeys. Some key insights came out of these discussions in terms of how participants reflected on their own experiences and the impact of the traits in question. Before responding with their experiences, each identified trait was defined for the participants so as to ensure that all participants are responding based on similar understandings of the traits that were introduced.

### 5.5.1 An inflated positive view of self

The inflated positive view of self was one of the most discussed traits in terms of the positive influence it has among entrepreneurs. Table 13 below provides a summary of the key findings, as well as some relevant quotes from the participants.

**Table 13: Summary of positive influence of ‘inflated positive view of self’**

Summary of findings from the interviews	Key Quotes
The ability to build confidence in others through one’s own high levels of confidence, enthusiasm and energy, including potential clients	<i>“I would tell people exactly how I feel even when it’s difficult for them to hear. I have been approached for work because of this trait” (Participant 4)</i>
The inciting of courage that drives entrepreneurs to test new opportunities based on their very high, sometimes irrational confidence levels	<i>“When I walk into a room and people see the confidence I have, they automatically have confidence in my ability. I believe there is nothing I can’t do. I operate on that confidence” (Participant 8)</i>
Inciting courage that helps entrepreneurs speak up, even to clients	
Irrational levels of confidence helped entrepreneurs to be more resilient	<i>“...having an inflated positive view of self gives you thick skin, which is very necessary in this space. You go through a lot of ‘no’ as an entrepreneur, and they bounce off you and you keep going because you have thick skin. This is important, to keep going. It builds resilience. Also, having an inflated positive view of self makes you immune to “no”. It just means the other person is wrong. So, you just carry on because you think the other person doesn’t know what they are doing.” (Participant 12)</i>
High levels of confidence helped them as entrepreneurs sell themselves better and improved communication skills	
Inciting of courage to start and do something they have minimal experience in	
High self-confidence and self-efficacy played an important role in influencing others through narratives and persuasiveness through selling, impacting clients, customers and teams	
High levels of confidence result in entrepreneurs visualizing much bigger possibilities in terms of potential business and opportunities, and enhances the ability to execute on those opportunities	



The impact of the inflated positive view of self on the personal development of entrepreneurs, as well as the important influence the trait is perceived to have had on the opportunities pursued is important to understand. One of the interview questions prompted participants to consider which of the identified narcissistic traits they considered to be the most impactful and influential on their entrepreneurial journey, and were asked to answer this by ranking the identified traits. Most of the participants highlighted the ‘inflated positive view of self’ as the most influential trait. It is important to note that the participants naturally responded in a positive context when reflecting on which of the traits had the most influence on their journeys, even though there was no indication of whether the influence in question was positive or negative. Table 14 below summarizes the findings when participants established how they ranked the importance of the traits in terms of the influence on their own entrepreneurial journeys. The inflated positive view of self was ranked the most influential trait.

**Table 14: Traits that have the most influence in terms of the entrepreneurial journey**

Rank	Narcissistic Traits	Frequency
1	Inflated positive view of self	9
2	Exhibitionism	4
3	Self-enhancement	3
4	Superiority	2
5	Entitlement	1

In answering this question and in reflecting on the most influential trait in their entrepreneurial journey, participants found themselves naturally looking at the question from a positive context, as they found that the identified traits had in fact played an important role in the decisions they made and the paths they ended up taking as entrepreneurs.

### **5.5.2 Self-enhancement**

In expressing the positive influence of this trait, participants referred to several experiences that influenced their entrepreneurial journey positively. In similar vein to the previously discussed trait, self-enhancement was also found to positively influence the entrepreneurial personality based on experience, as well as the decisions they made in terms of support and sources of feedback. Positive influences were also linked

to ways of working in terms of increased exploration and risk-taking. Table 15 below summarizes the key outcomes of the positive influences of the 'self-enhancement' trait, as well as a few quotes taken from interviews.

**Table 15: Summary of positive influence of 'self-enhancement'**

Summary of findings from the interviews	Key Quotes
<p>Motivation to maintain and enhance the positive view of self has allowed entrepreneurs to build a strong support structure outside of family, which has become a critical and useful part of their ecosystem</p>	<p><i>"...my success has been from being able to leverage off of other people." (Participant 5)</i></p>
<p>Actively sourcing and accessing guidance platforms from key resources which has helped entrepreneurs progress their businesses, through drawing guidance from experts</p>	<p><i>"I knelt on a mentor and support to guide me and teach me about emotional intelligence, which I was not exposed to prior to that" (Participant 8)</i></p>
<p>Positive impact on personal development through advisors and supporters becoming a source of strength, as well as an opportunity for honest and often difficult feedback</p>	<p><i>"[Risk has] improved my journey quite a lot. It allows me to move forward. I'm never scared to go...I'm not scared to try new things, and I will sit and I will figure it out" (Participant 2)</i></p>
<p>The encouragement of collaboration and exploration, for the purposes of progressing business opportunities</p>	<p><i>"[Risk-taking] has thrown a lot of opportunity my way. Being a risk-taker [opened me] up to stuff, because you're willing to take risk, and because you're willing to try different things in terms of solutions" (Participant 12)</i></p>
<p>The increased willingness to risk pushed entrepreneurs to learn a lot on the journey while also learning more about themselves as leaders, team players and clients</p>	
<p>Taking on more risks has also increased business opportunities which have come about based on exploration, with some starting new businesses unintentionally</p>	
<p>Gaining attention and the reciprocation of appreciation encouraged entrepreneurs to find their own value and sell that value, and also developed higher levels of confidence and courage</p>	

### 5.5.3 Superiority

Participants expressed positive influences with regards to the ‘superiority’ trait in terms of their experiences as established entrepreneurs. Table 16 below highlights the key findings from participants, while also presenting some of the key quotes in relation to positive influences of ‘superiority’ on the entrepreneurial journey

**Table 16: Summary of positive influence of ‘superiority’**

Summary of findings from the interviews	Key Quotes
<p>Having power and authority provided entrepreneurs with motivation that was necessary in continuing on the challenging path of entrepreneurship</p>	<p><i>“...when you do something and it actually happens the way you envisioned it, it gives you more confidence as an entrepreneur.</i></p>
<p>Authority and power have also given entrepreneurs responsibility that has motivated them to persevere and continue to grow</p>	<p><i>The more confidence you get the more you want to explore, the more you want to grow your company as well. The more you do, the more you envision and get things done the way you want, it just gives you more</i></p>
<p>Power also became a confidence booster for entrepreneurs, which directly impacted business development and business growth</p>	<p><i>confidence – and confidence is always good for the company.” (Participant 4)</i></p>
<p>Power allowing for entrepreneurs to impact their business culture, as well as employees’ happiness levels and energy</p>	<p><i>“[Leading your own organization] teaches you how to adapt, how to become your best at your lowest, and your lowest at your best.</i></p>
<p>Power impacted personal development through teaching entrepreneurs how to be adaptable and more resilient</p>	<p><i>The simple term is humility - It teaches you humility.” (Participant 7)</i></p>
<p>The opportunity to dominate environments proved a motivating force for entrepreneurs to aggressively explore opportunities that have impacted the growth of their businesses</p>	<p><i>“A lot of times I’m in environments where I feel like a lot of people don’t know what they are doing, and therefore I feel like I should dominate the space, and absolutely own it.</i></p>
<p>Power and domination inspired entrepreneurs to impact their business landscapes through having a positive impact on society, and addressing gaps they found in their environments</p>	<p><i>Dominating the environment and my organization influencing the business environment in which I operate is a big thing. It’s big for me because I think a lot of people are missing the boat and I think there’s a lot of opportunity to shape those environments in the right way”. (Participant 12)</i></p>

<p>Having the power to make the final decision has allowed entrepreneurs the opportunity to drive their visions forward, while the responsibility of making the final call has also served as a motivating force</p>	
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#### 5.5.4 Entitlement

Having a sense of entitlement or feelings of entitlement seemed to play an interesting role in positively influencing the participants within the sample on various levels. Table 17 summarizes the key findings from the interviews related to positive influences of ‘entitlement’, as well as key quotes.

**Table 17: Summary of positive influence of ‘entitlement’**

Summary of findings from the interviews	Key Quotes
<p>Participants acknowledged that feeling entitled to a particular space, industry or market has provided them the opportunity to learn more about that environment and increase their knowledge, and then find gaps and opportunities for them to exploit and turn into thriving businesses</p>	<p><i>“...that’s what made me push in [my] community. Feeling that this is what my people want, and this is our space, and our arena to play in. That’s what made me push into that part of the market” (Participant 2)</i></p>
<p>Entrepreneurs have been motivated by entitlement, and found themselves driven to work harder as they believed they needed to be in a particular space or industry. Entrepreneurs have also been motivated to strongly pursue their plans and tangibly develop their visions</p>	<p><i>“Once you place a certain value on what you do, and you go out in the market you have to demand the value, even though your product might not be at that value, you have to continuously be entitled to get paid that. And it’s not just monetarily. It can be in networks [and] resources. You have to feel entitled to get the value – entitlement is important.” (Participant 11)</i></p>
<p>Entitlement has impacted access to market and increased business opportunities</p>	
<p>Entitlement impacted clarity of vision for entrepreneurs, and allowed them to identify opportunities through creating products, services and concepts based on their visions</p>	<p><i>“Every year you know you’ve secured clients that will come back every year, because of entitlement and how you’ve announced things. The relationship takes care of itself.</i></p>

<p>Entitlement provided entrepreneurs an opportunity to create a level of value in their markets</p>	<p><i>You make sure that no one else can get your clients because they are yours.” (Participant 7)</i></p>
<p>Entitlement has resulted in entrepreneurs having high expectations of others, based on the high expectations they have of themselves. This has allowed them to create conducive environments for their teams to fulfil their potentials, uphold standards, and deliver high quality outputs</p>	<p><i>“I hold myself and my business to a high standard and it filters down to me having high expectations of my staff members. They have to live up to that standard, and uphold that standard” (Participant 2)</i></p>
<p>Personal development was impacted through increased courage, levels of confidence, as well as loyalty and relationship building</p>	<p><i>“There are more easier ways to make a living and to spend your time. There are easier decisions to make than what we do. So, if I’m going to do this – make these decisions, take this set of risks, spend all these hours, then I expect everyone involved whether internal or external to match my level of seriousness” (Participant 11)</i></p>

### 5.5.5 Exhibitionism

Exhibitionism was a trait that provided some key insights in terms of how this trait has become part of an important way to conduct business and ensure growth. Most of the participants reflected on their revised business practices that have been influenced by exhibitionism. Table 18 below represents the summary of findings, as well as key quotes from participants.

**Table 18: Summary of positive influence of ‘exhibitionism’**

Summary of findings from the interviews	Key Quotes
<p>Exhibitionism has provided opportunities for business development, through the sourcing of clients and opportunities</p>	<p><i>“We started the business with no resources – no money, no website - so we followed the classic exhibitionist route which was social media. We had to show off so people could believe we could do it... The only way you</i></p>

<p>Exhibitionist activities have influenced how entrepreneurs market themselves and have learnt to build their brands through exhibitionism, and also source more clients and get more work</p>	<p><i>get business is through people recognizing your business. So, it's really important for us to be known by the right individuals, and to get into the right spaces" (Participant 8)</i></p>
<p>The attention gained from exhibitionism has built confidence in entrepreneurs as well as clients, even before any actual work had been done</p>	<p><i>"We have to put it out there – look at us, we are the best. That's what we do to get clients. It's helped get clients into the door. (Participant 2)</i></p>
<p>Entrepreneurs have managed to increase their personal public profile and establish themselves as thought leaders within their industries</p>	<p><i>"The conversation that you have about yourself in a positive way gives you access to a conversation that you may not necessarily have if you were a recluse" (Participant 6)</i></p>
<p>Exhibitionism has served as a motivating force that has driven entrepreneurs to work harder to ensure they have outcomes that are worth exhibiting</p>	<p><i>"The reason I would show off is to sell more. The reality of running a company is that you have to show off, you have to sell, therefore you have to tell people how amazing you are, that's the nature of the job. If it's not you then somebody in your team needs to be doing this. If you're just inventing things and you're humble and don't go out there and show off, someone should be doing it and showing off for you" (Participant 12)</i></p>

### 5.6 Results for Research Question 3

**Research question 3:** Which of the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) are perceived to negatively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?

For the purpose of answering research question 3, the following constructs are discussed under each sub-heading: An inflated positive view of self, self-enhancement, superiority, entitlement, and exhibitionism.

This research question aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how the identified narcissistic traits were perceived to have negatively influenced the participants' entrepreneurial journey, and to gain insights into understanding how. The research question also aimed to establish new insights with regards to the negative experience of established entrepreneurs in terms of how their individual personality traits have played a role on their journey.

Similarly, to the interview process discussed in prelude to the presentation of the result for the second research question, participants were asked to discuss how and if the identified narcissistic traits had negatively influenced their entrepreneurial journeys. The aim was to gain further insights into how the same trait has, if applicable, played a parallel role in also influencing the entrepreneurial journeys of the participants negatively. As per the process described previously, before responding with their experiences, each identified trait was defined for the participants to ensure responses are based on a similar understanding.

### 5.6.1 An inflated positive view of self

This trait has negatively influenced the journeys of the participants in several aspects. Most participants could relate to how overconfidence negatively influenced how they operated as business people and as entrepreneurs. Table 19 below summarizes some of the negative influences of an 'inflated positive view of self', and key quotes coming out of discussions with established entrepreneurs.

**Table 19: Summary of negative influence of 'inflated positive view of self'**

Summary of findings from the interviews	Key Quotes
Entrepreneurs succumbing to complacency due to initial successes	<i>"After achieving something, the mind sometimes takes it as an absolute that you are now great at something. So, it always results in you taking your foot off the pedal for one or other thing, and sometimes that comes back to bite you" (Participant 5)</i>
Lack of attention to detail due to high levels of confidence, which has resulted in mismanaged outputs and dissatisfied clients and customers	<i>"The confidence we have in our skills and ability becomes our downfall because we neglect key fundamentals, and even clients" (Participant 9)</i>
Selective pursuit of opportunities due to overconfidence negatively impacted business progress for entrepreneurs, resulting in missed opportunities	

<p>Ignoring constructive feedback that has led to entrepreneurial failures</p> <p>Entrepreneurs had the tendency to over-promise and under-deliver, resulting in loss of clients.</p> <p>Managing over-selling due to overconfidence, which has resulted in bad decision-making in terms of the pursuit of out-of-scope projects</p> <p>External reactions due to being mis-read, assumptions of arrogance, and intimidation. This has resulted in rejections in the business space</p> <p>Overconfidence resulting in arrogance, and the courage to speak negatively to clients which has resulted in lost opportunities</p>	<p><i>“Some key industry players have written me off because of the things I’ve said to them, even when they see later that I was right. People would rather fail themselves than reach out to me because of what I did to them or how I communicated to them.” (Participant 4)</i></p> <p><i>“The moment you walk into that environment with that big head, with that ‘I’m the authority’, you already get people’s tensions up and that level of respect drops, and the judgement increases.” (Participant 8)</i></p>
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### 5.6.2 Self-enhancement

Participants reflected on various experiences that highlighted some of the negative influences of this trait that they had personally experienced. Most participants connected to the idea of attempting to maintain and enhance a positive view of self which influenced several negative outcomes in terms of their experiences with risk-taking, manipulation, and decision-making. Table 20 below summaries the key findings in terms of negative influences of the ‘self-enhancement’ trait, as well as a few of the relevant quotes from participants.

**Table 20: Summary of negative influence of ‘self-enhancement’**

Summary of findings from the interviews	Key Quotes
<p>Risk-taking resulted in unwanted and unplanned outcomes which entrepreneurs struggled to recover from</p>	<p><i>“I am a loose cannon when it comes to money...I use finances loosely instead of being more careful with money. These are my constant mistakes” (Participant 9)</i></p>



<p>Manipulation that resulted in over-selling and portraying unreal images in order to make sales, which they could not sustain</p> <p>Lack of patience and empathy from entrepreneurs when it came to dealing with people due to growing frustrations in their attempts to maintain a positive image</p> <p>The swift removal of people who were not aligned</p> <p>Bad financial decisions along with bad money management</p> <p>A constant and sometimes debilitating need for attention and praise, which resulted in them adjusting their plans to source this attention</p> <p>Extremely high expectations have resulted in entrepreneurs struggling with experiencing appreciation and gratitude, as well as trying to sustain unattainable images of themselves</p>	<p><i>“...I expect people to operate like me, and that’s unrealistic and not fair as I’ve been told” (Participant 8)</i></p> <p><i>“You pitch something that you are over-confident with and then you bomb. The issue is around over-selling...” (Participant 10)</i></p> <p><i>“A person can be good at what they do, dedicated, they can work hard, but [when] I’ve had to micro-manage them, they are gone” (Participant 12)</i></p>
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### 5.6.3 Superiority

The superiority trait presented some insights into the negative influences such a trait can have on the entrepreneur. When reflecting on the need for power and authority, most of the participants could relate to the frustrations they had experienced. Table 21 below summarizes the key findings related to negative influences of ‘superiority’, as well as some of the relevant quotes from participants.

**Table 21: Summary of negative influence of ‘superiority’**

Summary of findings from the interviews	Key Quotes
Fear, frustration, worry and anxiety associated with having a lot of power and authority	<i>“You are consistently accountable for other people’s decisions even if those decisions are not in compliance with your instructions</i>

<p>Struggle with enjoying their work due to high responsibilities based on power</p>	<p><i>or your leadership. Everything is your fault, and that's not enjoyable" (Participant 11)</i></p>
<p>Constant struggles with alignment across stakeholders, resulting in reduced efficiencies and delayed outcomes</p>	<p><i>"I've potentially missed out on opportunities because there are certain opportunities that I have not got myself involved in because of who's involved in that space, and also if you feel like everyone is stupid it's tough to get involved. If you feel like you should be showing people how things should be done and not the other way around then it's difficult to get involved. When I've had that superior outlook, and I feel like people have nothing to show me, it's influenced the opportunities I'm willing to take, and what kind of control I want within my destiny." (Participant 12).</i></p>
<p>Mishandling and disrespecting stakeholders and key clients due to superiority complex developed from having power</p>	<p><i>"[Dominance] has made me get skipped though because I've seemingly got more opportunity than I need" (Participant 6)</i></p>
<p>Missed business opportunities due to assumptions of industry dominance and high charges</p>	
<p>Constant disappointment due to having high standards based on need to dominate environments, lack of alignment to others, and constant rejection</p>	
<p>The unnecessary question and adjustment of business models and core business due to struggles with industry domination, which have resulted in low team morale and business setbacks</p>	

**5.6.4 Entitlement**

The perceived negative influences of entitlement also provided further insights into the connectivity of the identified traits highlighted in this study. Participants reflected on how feelings of entitlement have resulted in several types of negative influences that have impacted not only themselves as business people, but also their stakeholders, their businesses, and their futures. Table 22 summarizes the key findings from participants, as well as some of the relevant quotes.

**Table 22: Summary of negative influence of ‘entitlement’**

Summary of findings from the interviews	Key Quotes
Entitlement resulting in difficulty with adjusting plans and changing course, to the detriment of the business due to wasted time and missed opportunities	<i>“It’s really hard for people to convince me not to do something because by the time I’m at that point, where it’s the doing, I’ve already seen it play out so many ways, I know how to make sure it doesn’t [mess up]” (Participant 8)</i>
Entitlement to specific markets has resulted in loss of opportunities and reduced business in other markets	<i>“Just because you feel entitled to a particular client, and you see them on your roster as a client, doesn’t mean it will actually happen... you have to keep working to retain them and sometimes you miss that part” (Participant 7)</i>
Entitlement resulting in loss of clients based on lack of client relationship management	<i>“If [my] entitlement wasn’t as prominent I think I would have been able to gauge the environment a lot sooner” (Participant 1)</i>
Loss of clients and key stakeholders due to misread arrogance, alienation, and perceived belittling	<i>“The entitlement of my business has meant that I find it difficult to let go. It’s mine and I’m entitled to it, but for it to grow, I [should have] let it go” (Participant 4)</i>
Entitlement to specific visions has resulted in lack of alignment to team members and other stakeholders, negatively impacting business processes and outputs	
Stunted business growth due to entrepreneurs feeling entitled to their vision and their business, and not allowing it to grow and succeed through others	

### **5.6.5 Exhibitionism**

Participants reflected on the various negative influences they have experienced due to the exhibitionism trait. Table 23 below reflects the key findings, along with some of the relevant quotes from participants.

**Table 23: Summary of negative influence of ‘exhibitionism’**

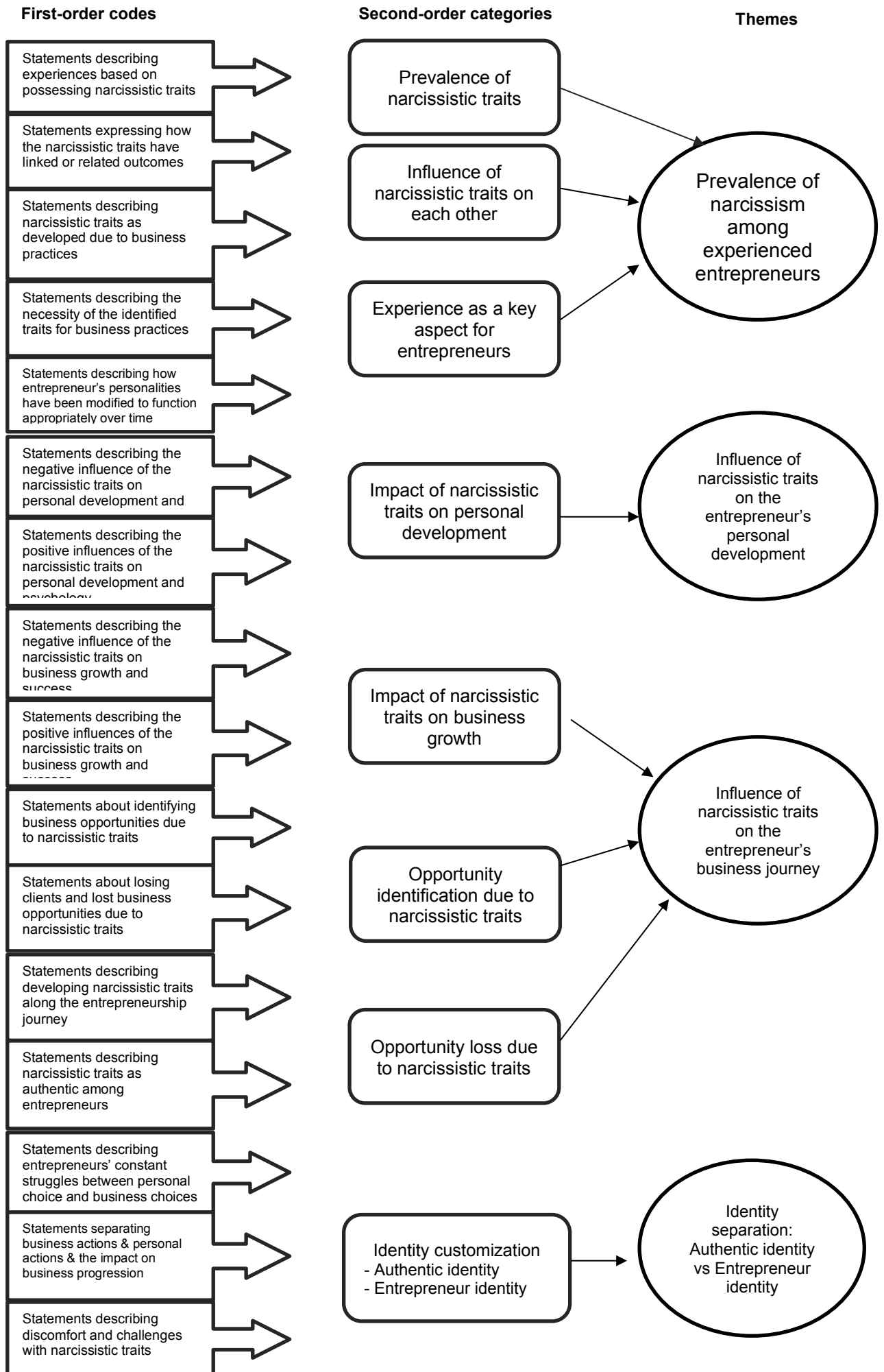
Summary of findings from the interviews	Key Quotes
<p>Insincere and inauthentic behaviour from competitors who received unworthy attention and praise, which resulted in lost opportunities</p>	<p><i>“I don’t like [attention]. It makes me anxious. If it brings more business then yes, I will receive it. But I prefer to work in corners and have the work itself show and not necessarily me. So, when that happens it kind of makes me anxious but happy at the same time because I’m being recognized for the things that I’m doing.” (Participant 10)</i></p>
<p>Difficulty with maintaining the momentum of exhibitionism, which has resulted in reduced effectiveness in business development</p>	
<p>Struggles with fulfilling commitments due to levels of exhibitionism and actual capacity not matching</p>	<p><i>“...clients use [my strategy] as their own and copy my DNA, because I put it out there.</i></p>
<p>Alienating stakeholders due to exhibitionist actions being considered distasteful</p>	<p><i>Even suppliers copy the DNA” (Participant 8)</i></p>
<p>Imitation and duplication from competitors due to exhibitionism, which has resulted in lost business</p>	<p><i>“...the work ended up becoming sub-par, [as] we weren’t doing the work that we needed to. There wasn’t a match between what [we were] exhibiting and the work we are actually able to do” (Participant 1)</i></p>
<p>Constant battle with authenticity as entrepreneurs struggled with what was right for themselves vs what was right for their businesses, which has resulted in personal strain which includes stress, anxiety, annoyance and discomfort</p>	<p><i>“Showing off about yourself and who you are is not great. It’s about the work, not about myself” (Participant 6)</i></p>

### **5.7 Overview of Data coding and Emergent Themes**

In the process of thematic analysis as prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the coding process produced 210 zero-order codes, which then translated into first-order codes, second-order categories and the emergent themes. The findings presented in this chapter encompass the results found in the research study, and through the coding process there were key themes that emerged that will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Figure 5 below summarizes this coding and theming process.

**Figure 5: Summary of coding process and emerging themes**



## 5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to comprehensively present the results from the in-depth interviews conducted with the established entrepreneurs. The aim was not only to answer the research questions, but also to gain a deeper understanding of the role narcissism plays in entrepreneurship. While the constructs that emerged are supported by the existing literature on the topic of narcissism and entrepreneurship, new insights have emerged that allow for the extension to the current literature on the role of narcissism in entrepreneurship, and also help to add new insights on the nuances of this dynamic. Table 24 below presents a summary of findings in relation to the research questions.

**Table 24: Summary of findings to the Research Questions**

Research Questions	Summary Findings
<p><b>RQ 1:</b> Are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) prevalent among established entrepreneurs during their entrepreneurial journey?</p>	<p>The identified narcissistic traits are indeed prevalent, with ‘an inflated positive view of self’ and ‘exhibitionism’ being described as the most influential in terms of the entrepreneurial journey. However, the significance of the balance between the authentic self and the entrepreneur self was constantly referred to by participants, implying a conscious effort to separate their own preferences and what is necessary for their businesses. This may likely explain the prevalence of the presence of the traits among the entrepreneurs.</p>
<p><b>RQ 2:</b> How are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) perceived to positively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?</p>	<p>The significance of the impact on personal development and business development was found in the responses related to the positive influence of the identified narcissistic traits. The impact the traits have had on the entrepreneurs’ business processes, direction and growth was highlighted and described.</p>

<p><b>RQ 3:</b> How are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) perceived to negatively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?</p>	<p>The responses here further highlighted the multidimensional nature of the identified narcissistic traits and how the mismanagement of these traits has significantly influenced the journey of entrepreneurs through lost opportunity and loss of clients that has negatively impacted their businesses. Also, the influence on character development and personal development was also described, and a strong link between the traits and the entrepreneurial journey both in personally and in business was confirmed.</p>
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In exploring the link between narcissism and entrepreneurship, what became clearer in discussions with the established entrepreneurs who took part in the research is the significant role that narcissism has played in all of their entrepreneurial journeys. What was also confirmed, especially based on existing literature, is how narcissism indeed seems to be an integral personality dimension for entrepreneurs as it has strong influences on their businesses as well as their personal development. Furthermore, the constant battle between the authentic identity and the entrepreneur identity was highlighted throughout the interviews, indicating a deeper insight around the types of personality dimensions established entrepreneurs have learnt to access through their experiences in order to survive, and more importantly, thrive as entrepreneurs. The inextricable connection between narcissism and entrepreneurship is highlighted through the interviews, and the next chapter aims to discuss the findings in detail while comparing the existing literature with the key findings of the research. The core themes introduced in Figure 5 above will formulate the discussion in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

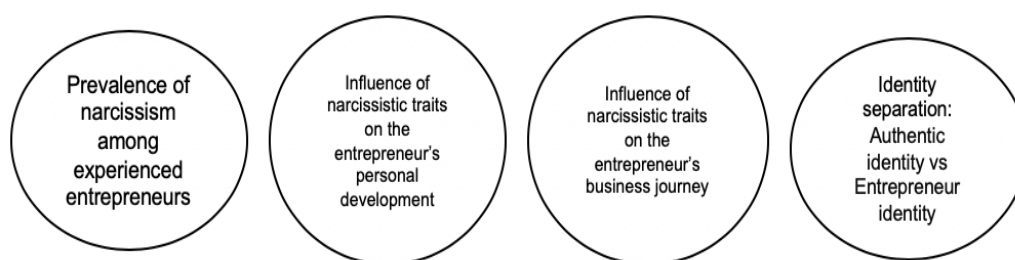
#### 6.1 Introduction

The findings presented in Chapter 5 are discussed in this chapter with the aim of ensuring the purpose of the research is fulfilled. The results will be discussed in detail in the context of the literature presented in Chapter 2, and the analysis in this chapter will aim to respond to the three Research Questions while comparing and contrasting the existing literature. The research findings and the insights gained through the study contribute to the core discussion related to gaining a deeper understanding of the significance of the role of narcissism within entrepreneurship, in the context of established entrepreneurs.

#### 6.2 Overview of the key themes

The key themes that emerged from the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) conducted for this study were introduced in the previous chapter, and summarized in Figure 5 (p. 75). These themes indicate the key findings in the research, and are illustrated in Figure 6 below.

**Figure 6: Key themes that emerged from the coding process**



The themes highlight the key findings that correlate with the research questions. The analysis following aims to demonstrate that the research questions were indeed answered and that the existing literature presented in Chapter 2 either supports the findings or not. The discussion will follow based on the Research Questions, and the emergent themes will be discussed as is relevant to the Research Questions.



## **6.3 Discussion of Results for Research Question 1**

**Research question 1: Are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) prevalent among established entrepreneurs during their entrepreneurial journey?**

The aim of Research Question 1 was to confirm if the narcissistic traits that have been identified as the most significant in describing narcissism, were indeed prevalent among established entrepreneurs. While the main purpose of the study was to gain key insights around how narcissism influences the entrepreneurial journey, it was important to first establish whether the identified narcissistic traits actually exist within established entrepreneurs. While several traits have been linked to narcissism, the study focused on what seemed to be the most common traits as found in the literature (O'Reilly et al., 2014; Campbell et al., 2011; Singh et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2019; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013), and the research sought to understand if the identified traits were indeed relevant. Furthermore, the research sought to gain a deeper understanding of how these traits, which have been said to be inherent in entrepreneurs (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Navis & Ozbek, 2016), actually influence the entrepreneurial journey.

### **6.3.1 Prevalence of narcissism among experienced entrepreneurs**

In developing the themes from the study, the prevalence of narcissism among experienced entrepreneurs represented a commonality found among the individuals interviewed. The prevalence of the identified narcissistic traits was in line with the current literature and this finding was not unexpected, however, the insights gained in exploring this prevalence presented some unique insights that allow for extension to the current discussions around narcissism and entrepreneurship.

One of the overarching discussions around the entrepreneurial personality focuses on the ability of personality traits to significantly impact entrepreneurial outcomes (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Brockhaus, 1982; Antoncic et al., 2015; Leutner et al., 2014). While some of the data aligns with this understanding, a further alignment is found in the suggestion that the experience of established entrepreneurs actually allows them to access certain traits that are specifically for the purposes of functioning as an entrepreneur, instead of those traits developing authentically. This links to one of the other key themes that will be discussed in further detail below, which is related to Identity Separation linked to the Authentic self vs the Entrepreneur self.

Mathieu & St-Jean (2013) along with Hmieleski & Lerner (2016) highlighted how narcissism was not only a central construct explaining entrepreneurship, but was also a necessary trait on the entrepreneurial journey. The data found in relation to the prevalence of the identified narcissistic traits supported this understanding, with an extension of the literature being found in the insights around the nuances and practicalities linked to the prevalence of the traits.

Beyond the prevalence of the traits, the experience more especially in relation to established entrepreneurs seems to indicate that the prevalence of the traits was directly related to experience, with participants often highlighting how mistakes and learnings over time have helped them to develop or access traits that have allowed them longevity as entrepreneurs. This finding is also supported by the literature which indicates the likelihood of the prevalence of dark triad characteristics, which include narcissism, among established entrepreneurs due to the difficult and challenging experience of entrepreneurship (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Kautonen, Van Gelderen & Fink, 2015). This may be one of the reasons explaining the expected prevalence of the narcissistic traits. The following discussion focuses on the identified narcissistic traits that were the focus of the study: an inflated positive view of self, self-enhancement, superiority, entitlement and exhibitionism.

### **6.3.1.1 The prevalence of an inflated positive view of self**

One of the most commonly mentioned core traits in the literature when describing and defining narcissism was overconfidence, an inflated sense of self, and an inflated positive view of self (Liu et al., 2019; Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Macenczak et al., 2016; Twenge et al., 2008; Adams et al., 2015). It therefore came as no surprise when this trait and similar descriptions thereof were highlighted often by the participants, who for example unanimously and confidently described themselves as being good at what they do, described themselves as visionaries, and also described the work they do as extraordinary. These high levels of self-confidence and high self-esteem are said to be key traits in describing narcissistic leaders (Al-Shammari et al., 2019; Adams et al., 2015; O'Reilly III et al., 2014), and the prevalence of these traits were further indicated by participants who very often referred to their self-assurance and high confidence in relation to their work, which came out as one of the most commonly mentioned first-order codes in the thematic analysis. Participants also identified with having high levels of self-belief, which links to descriptions in research that indicate how entrepreneurs believed that they could make anything happen with any resource (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Al-Shammari et al., 2019).

In unpacking thoughts around viewing themselves as special or extraordinary, participants confidently referred to themselves as visionaries based on their experiences as entrepreneurs and with the awareness of their potential. This is in line again with the literature that describes narcissistic entrepreneurs as visionaries and big thinkers (Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Hotchkiss, 2003), along with Miller's (2015, p.2) reference to entrepreneurs as "special type[s] of individual[s]". The lack of hesitation in addressing and relaying examples of this trait in action further highlighted the significance of this trait, in that often the participants drew on their mental strength and their confidence in their abilities to move forward on their entrepreneurial journeys.

### **6.3.1.2 Exploring the complexity of self-enhancement**

The self-enhancement trait was likely the most challenging to explore and understand in order to gauge its true prevalence among the participants. Participants were mixed in their thoughts around the need to enhance themselves through essentially putting themselves ahead of others whether through seeking attention, taking credit from others, taking risks, or fiercely and actively striving to maintain positive views of themselves (Twenge et al., 2008; Miller, 2015; Holland & Shepherd, 2013; Liu et al., 2019). However, this aligns to the complexity indicated in the definitions from the literature around this identified trait, which often preceded a discussion related to the complex and multi-faceted nature of narcissism (Leutner et al., 2014; Raskin & Hall, 1979; Ames et al., 2006).

In contrast to the descriptions of self-enhancement which suggest an activeness in enhancing the positive view of self along with taking credit from others (Liu et al., 2019; Twenge et al., 2008), it was surprising to find such little mention from the participants in relating to these traits specifically. Furthermore, complex and varied responses were found in relation to low empathy and manipulation, which are also key traits to describe the narcissistic trait of self-enhancement (O'Reilly III et al., 2014; Twenge et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2019). While the literature described these traits as prevalent among narcissistic entrepreneurs, most participants did not agree, and it was thus challenging to conclude their significance overall.

However, participants could relate to the seeking of attention along with risk-taking traits, which is supported by literature that highlights these as important parts of the self-enhancement trait (Miller, 2015; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Foo, 2011; Holland & Shepherd, 2013; Twenge et al., 2008). While reactions were still somewhat mixed in responses related to actively seeking the receipt of compliments to attract attention,

participants were aligned in expressing the prevalence of risk-taking in their entrepreneurial journey. In fact, risk-taking was emphasized as a critical trait across the spectrum, which is in line with the literature that highlights the willingness to take risk and the tolerance for risk as important for enhancing the entrepreneurial journey (Foo, 2011; Holland & Shepherd, 2013; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007), a connection which was supported by the findings. This finding also adds to the literature around the importance of the risk propensity trait in that it has been found to be a useful predictor of entrepreneurial behaviour and outcomes, and thus plays an important role in the entrepreneurial journey (Zhao et al., 2010; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013).

An interesting new insight emerged that placed emphasis on the prevalence of narratives working as inspiration for entrepreneurs, where participants reflected on how narratives seem to be a critical part of their entrepreneurial journeys. Based on the scope of the research, the insights were limited to narcissism and how narratives contribute to the prevalence of this trait, however this may be an area for future research within this space.

The willingness to learn also came about as an important consideration and an emerging insight, and participants often described their feelings of empowerment through learning from experience as well as taking guidance from others. This is in contrast to the discussions in the literature, which describe narcissists as drawing inspiration and empowerment mostly from their own visions and their own capabilities, and the opportunity to have power and admiration from others (Wiklund, 2019; Pinto & Patanakul, 2015; Martinsen, 2019; Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Al-Shammari et al., 2019). Furthermore, in contrast to the literature, participants emphasized how they drew a great deal of inspiration for longevity through their passion, and also their ability to surprise themselves through the growth they gain from attempts, failure and success which also links back to the impact of experience.

The description of the “preoccupation with the self” (Hart et al., 2017, p.48) is another one that contradicts most of the discussions that were held with the participants. In this description narcissists are said to have an active and seemingly predominant focus on reinforcing a higher version of themselves (Navis & Ozbek, 2016). This was found to not necessarily be the case among those in the sample for this study, as the main challenges came around having to seek reinforcement, admiration and attention from others in their quest to succeed as entrepreneurs. The challenges expressed with regards to maintaining a specific image by all means necessary was one that greatly

challenged the participants and often resulted in discomfort, mainly due to the difficulties expressed when aiming to get ahead as an entrepreneur and how that impacts those around them. This again contradicts the literature which emphasizes 'self' and not having empathy around others (Hart et al., 2017; O'Reilly III et al., 2014).

The complexity found in the prevalence of the self-enhancement trait was mostly linked to the contradictions in the intentions stated in the literature around the active need to seek attention and be seen ahead of others, while working to ensure a positive image (Liu et al., 2019; Twenge et al., 2008). However, in describing their experiences and explaining their own personalities, overall there is a prevalence of the self-enhancement trait among the established entrepreneurs interviewed for the study.

### **6.3.1.3 The prevalence of superiority**

The need for dominance and power has been highlighted as significant in describing narcissism, specifically in line with the superiority trait in this study (Gerstner, König, Enders, & Hambrick, 2013; Martinsen, Arnulf, Furnham & Lang-Ree, 2019). This need is one that was confirmed through the participants' responses, as there was a consistent alignment to a preference for power and authority. However, participants described a nuance to the current literature that speaks about actively seeking power and control (Martinsen et al., 2019; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Wang, 2019). The motivation behind the need for power and control emerged as a new insight in exploring this phenomenon of narcissism within entrepreneurship. While literature implies that narcissistic entrepreneurs seek power for the purposes of fame, status and control (Martinsen et al., 2019; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Wang, 2019; Liu et al., 2019), the participants consistently expressed their seeking of power for the purposes of advancing and fulfilling their visions, ensuring responsibility and accountability, as well as doing work that is impactful to others.

There is some literature within the scope of the study that specifically covers these aspects and thus this may be considered an extension of the literature in that it provides deeper insight around the prevalence of the superiority trait. While having the need to dominate others is often referred to in literature on this subject (Al-Shammari et al., 2019), the findings from the research steered more towards the need to dominate the environment as aligned to Gestner et al.'s work (2013). The participants often emphasized the need to have power or authority for the purposes of dominating a particular environment or industry, specifically based on their need to fulfil particular goals that could impact society. Participants also often referred to their awareness of

the responsibility they held through their power, a responsibility which most did not take lightly. This extends the literature presented in chapter 2 in that while the superiority trait was often present in the participants' responses, the motivation behind the existence of this trait provided insights into the personality of those who participated in the study. This insight is also reiterated through the participants' highly emphasized preference for delegation which was often referred to. This is in contradiction to the emphasis on power and control in the literature (Martinsen et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2019) that highlights this need being based on pure domination and the seeking of superiority.

Furthermore, the need for dominance was often linked to Wiklund's (2019) description of entrepreneurs, where they were described as seeking to do work that is linked to their passion and to their need to leave a legacy or make a positive impact. Beyond the motivation, findings related to superiority highlighted the prevalence of this trait, while extending the insights around superiority in relation to established entrepreneurs and their understanding of their own personalities.

#### **6.3.1.4 Entitlement**

The 'entitlement' trait was unpacked through gaining a deeper understanding of the practice of entitlement and what this trait meant to the participants on their journeys as entrepreneurs. In line with descriptions around this trait, participants were found to possess a sense of entitlement predominantly in the form of feeling entitled to their own dreams and to their success. This is in contrast to the dominating theme of the literature around this trait, where a sense of entitlement was linked to feeling important (Hart & Adams, 2014; Macenczak et al., 2016). Entitlement as described by the participants extends the definition of the trait in that there is a keen focus on entitlement to a specific plan, goal or even business. Furthermore, in the literature entitlement was often vaguely referred to in addition to discussing other narcissistic attributes such as the seeking of attention, the need for power and control, and overconfidence (Martinsen et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2019; Macenczak et al., 2015), however participants' responses related to entitlement allowed for the extension of the literature through providing greater understanding how a sense of entitlement has been necessary for them in their role as entrepreneurs.

A further extension of the literature is related to how most participants had an expectation and preference for others to adopt to their visions and their thinking, and

most referred to frustrations around having to get others to understand them and to behave like them. This can also be described as entitlement and is supported in the literature, where descriptions in the literature emphasize the way in which narcissistic entrepreneurs expect others to adopt to their thinking and vision (Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Hotchkiss, 2003). What was most prevalent in the discussions surrounding these expectations was that the participants also linked their extremely high expectations of others to the expectations they have of themselves. This is key to understanding the sense of entitlement that is often linked to entrepreneurs, and through the findings it is evident that the high expectations of others are not necessarily due to arrogance and a lack of flexibility as is often suggested as the reasoning behind this trait (Wales, Patel & Lumpkin, 2013; Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Martinsen et al., 2019); but instead the deeper reasoning is connected to self-belief and a drive that motivates a need to fulfil a bigger vision. This was consistent throughout the participants' elaborations when explaining their entitlement to other stakeholder's trust, effort and focus, and provides new insights to understanding the prevalence of entitlement as a narcissistic trait among established entrepreneurs.

There is limited literature that specifically discusses feedback, and how unpacking the nuances of the sources of feedback helped to further understand the entitlement trait. Participants emphasized not just the importance of feedback, but more specifically who it is coming from. The ranking of feedback importance highlighted how participants felt entitled to their ways of working and their business practices, along with their visions, a finding which is not explicit in the literature. They emphasized how while constructive and constant feedback was important and often actively sought, who the feedback comes from was as important as what the feedback is. This implies an entitlement to guidance and feedback that is from people that are experienced and respected rather than unjustified commentary from the public in general. This also forms an emerging new insight that allows for a deeper understanding of the entitlement trait within narcissism.

Entitlement is another trait that is prevalent based on the experiences and perceptions described by the participants. The additional insight has been around understanding the deeper reasoning behind this entitlement and how it is exercised practically.

### **6.3.1.5 The practicality and functional value of exhibitionism**

In chapter 5, the dichotomous relationship the participants seemed to have with exhibitionism was introduced, where the resounding thought was around exhibitionism

being an uncomfortable and weird reality of someone who is practicing in the entrepreneurship space. While the literature highlighted the constant desire of admiration and applause as essential (Liu et al., 2019; Macenczak et al., 2016), the findings disagree with this literature in that most of the participants expressed that some of their biggest frustrations and challenges were related to the balancing of exhibitionist practices. Contrary to some of the literature, which describes those possessing this trait as actively seeking fame, admiration, attention and validation (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Liu et al., 2019; Wang et al., 1991; Twenge et al., 2008), participants rather described the possession of this trait as necessary and essential for them. Scholars have expressed the necessity of narcissism for the survival of entrepreneurs and a critical element of the entrepreneurial personality (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Klotz & Neubaum, 2016, Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013), and the findings of the study support this notion.

An interesting extension to this discussion is the practical nature of the possession and application of this exhibitionist trait. Instead of linking exhibitionism to the need for validation and applause in connection with actively expressing self-importance (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Al-Shammari et al., 2019; Hart et al., 2017), participants rather emphasized the importance of exhibitionism for the purposes of awareness, information, sourcing and confirming clientele as well as customers. Participants elaborated on this issue and further contradicted the literature that focuses on the seeking of fame, media attention and praise (Al-Shammari et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2019; Macenczak et al., 2016), through expressing their desire to avoid being 'entrepreneur celebrities' or the face of their companies. Instead they often expressed the ideal of having their work speak for itself instead of them having to exhibit themselves and their work, however through experience they have found the positive function of embracing this trait, in that it acts as a form of business development, a finding which will be elaborated on later in this chapter.

The findings often linked recognition to personal growth and development, in line with the literature that highlights entrepreneurship as having an important impact on an individual's well-being, growth and personal development (Wiklund et al., 2019). The insights around grandiose behaviour as referred to in the literature (O'Reilly III et al., 2014) were also in contradiction to the actual behaviour of the participants in the study, as most expressed their struggles and their frustrations with such grandiosity whether in line with their own experiences or that of their competitors.

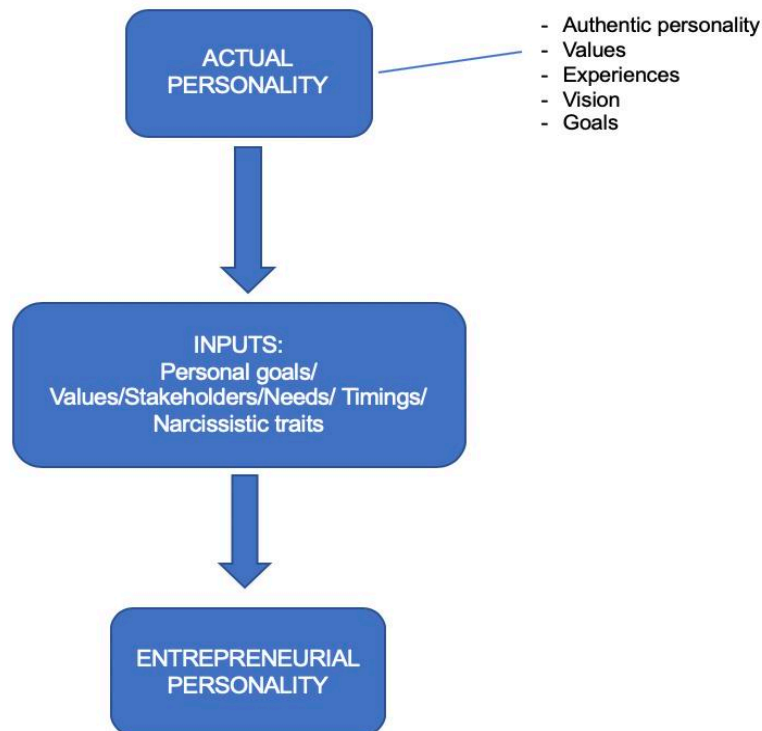


The complexity highlighted in attempting to understand the prevalence of exhibitionism is also implied in the literature when expressing complexities that continue to surround the defining of entrepreneurial personalities (Antoncic et al., 2015; Brandstätter, 2011; Miller, 2015). While it seems the trait of exhibitionism does indeed exist in practice, the functional application of this trait implies that perhaps this trait does not necessarily exist purely as described in the literature around the prevalence of exhibitionism (Liu et al., 2019; Macenczak et al., 2016; Twenge et al., 2008; O'Reilly III et al., 2014). Instead, an emerging insight is that certain traits may be accessed purposely so as to function as an entrepreneur. This is another insight that will be explored further below as this also developed as a key theme in the coding process.

### **6.3.2 Identity Separation: Authentic self vs Entrepreneurial self**

An emerging insight in the findings adds an interesting complexity to the understanding of the entrepreneurial personality and how the prevalence of narcissism influences the entrepreneurial journey. Very often in responding to the questions in the interview schedule, participants would query whether they should respond as themselves, or respond based on how they would function as entrepreneurs. As this response and separation became more common it became clear that there seemed to be a movement towards accessing certain personality traits in order to effectively perform as an entrepreneur, a realisation which established entrepreneurs have been able to establish over time and through various experiences. In line with the literature, while some traits felt more intrinsic to entrepreneurs such as the need for dominance, self-belief and self-confidence, even overconfidence (Liu et al., 2019; Al-Shammari et al., 2019; Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Macenczak et al., 2016), it seemed that participants also often reflected on the traits they have learnt to access so as to practice and seemingly succeed as entrepreneurs, which is another possible area for future research. Figure 7 below illustrates the separation between one's authentic personality and the inputs that end up resulting in the entrepreneurial personality.

**Figure 7: Model representing the separation between the authentic personality and the entrepreneurial personality**



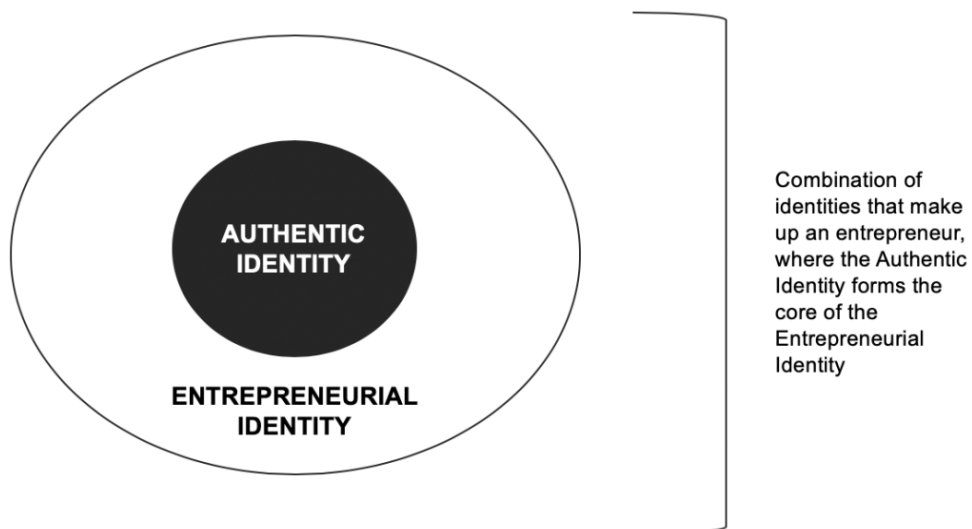
Source: Own compilation

While literature refers to the ability to predict entrepreneurial outcomes through drawing on information from personalities (Leutner, 2014; Brandstätter, 2011;), this study adds a dimension that reflects the possibility of personality traits functioning as a business process involved in entrepreneurship rather than a necessary personality trait. Established entrepreneurs seem to have learnt through their experiences that there are certain aspects of their personality, whether authentic or not, that are critical business functions that help them grow their businesses and have influenced them positively on their entrepreneurial journeys. There is little literature that deals specifically with this dynamic, where participants have likened some of the narcissistic traits to business functions. This is seen where, for example, exhibitionism is compared to a functional process such as sales or marketing, and referred to when drawing on such a trait purposely for such functional outcomes.

### 6.3.3 Conclusive Findings for Research Question 1

The findings indicate that the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self, self-enhancement, superiority, entitlement, exhibitionism) are indeed prevalent within established entrepreneurs. While there were some complexities introduced in terms of the levels of prevalence depending on the participants' varied experiences and perceptions, it was clear that the traits did exist as characteristics within the entrepreneurs, and seem to represent a dynamic part of the established entrepreneurial personality. An interesting dynamic was introduced through the insight introduced regarding the theme of identity separation, where participants commonly referred to their authentic identities as well as their entrepreneurial identities. Participants implied a deeper understanding of the traits that have been helpful on their entrepreneurial journey, and seem to have learnt to access those traits depending on the outcomes they are looking for. The findings also highlighted that even though entrepreneurs describe an identity separation within their entrepreneurial journey, it seems that the two identities are actually linked within entrepreneurship, with the authentic identity forming the basis of the entrepreneurial identity. This link is represented by Figure 8 below.

**Figure 8: The link between the Authentic identity and the Entrepreneurial identity**



Source: Own compilation

This identity separation could possibly explain the prevalence of the identified narcissistic traits, and understanding the details around how these identities are developed presents an area for future research. In addition, the findings support the literature where authors emphasized the lack of consensus in defining the complexity of entrepreneurial personalities (Antoncic et al., 2015; Brandstätter, 2011; Miller, 2015), however the study's focus on established entrepreneurs has allowed for deeper insights to be developed regarding the existence of narcissistic traits within entrepreneurship, as well as the layers introduced within the identified traits.

## **6.4 Discussion of Results for Research Question 2**

**Research question 2: How are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) perceived to positively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?**

Exploring and understanding the positive influences of the identified narcissistic traits has, in line with the literature, allowed for the demonstration of the multi-faceted nature of narcissism and how it has been described as impactful on the entrepreneurial journey (Macenczak et al., 2016; Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Judge, Piccolo & Kosalka, 2009). It was clear when unpacking the responses from the participants that similar traits could have a multitude of outcomes, and in this section the aim is to discuss how narcissistic traits have been expressed as a demonstration of the constructive channeling of traits that are often deemed as negative (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Miller, 2015; Furnham et al., 2013). Two key themes emerged that were relevant to discussions related to understanding the influence of the identified narcissistic traits on the entrepreneurial journey, and these were related to how these traits have a significant influence on two specific aspects: the entrepreneur's personal development, and the entrepreneur's business journey. These themes will be explored across both Research Questions 2 and 3 based on the positive and negative influences uncovered in the findings.

### **6.4.1 Influence of identified narcissistic traits on the entrepreneur's personal development**

In the coding process the second-order categories highlighted the links to personal

development as a key finding. This comes as no surprise based on the literature that highlights how narcissism in line with the practice of entrepreneurship is described as having a positive impact in terms of growth and personal development (Wiklund et al., 2019). Participants referred to their own growth especially in line with courage, self-efficacy and higher self-confidence. This finding is supported in the literature that highlights how narcissism influences the entrepreneurial journey through positively influencing self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-assurance (Miller, 2015; Martinsen et al., 2019). Other findings supported by the literature are related to positive influences on personal development that include an increased ability to influence people which also impacts confidence and courage (Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Hotchkiss, 2003; Liu et al., 2019; Navis & Ozbek, 2016). The positive influence on courage was emphasized often by participants, a finding that provides new insights that allow for a better understanding of the influence of the identified narcissistic traits. The link between an inflated positive view of self and increased courage was highlighted as highly impactful in the personal development of entrepreneurs.

Another highly emphasized outcome was related to the identified narcissistic traits resulting in high motivation among entrepreneurs. This was supported by the findings, where the ability for the traits to serve as a motivating influence for entrepreneurs was commonly emphasized by the participants and was also highlighted as one of the main outcomes across the identified traits (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Liu et al., 2019; Al-Shammari et al., 2019; Martinsen et al., 2019; Navis & Ozbek, 2016). Again, in line with the literature, motivation remains an important element especially as it has been expressed as being highly influential in terms of influencing entrepreneurs to stay within the challenging entrepreneurial field (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Liu et al., 2019; Al-Shammari et al., 2019; Martinsen et al., 2019).

The significance of this motivation is where the extension to the literature comes about. Most of the literature links this motivation to the realisation of the need to maintain superiority and dominance, fulfilling the need for attention and admiration, and the desire for personal attention (Liu et al., 2019; Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Al-Shammari et al., 2019). Participants instead referred to their key areas of motivation coming from leadership, from the power of responsibility, and from the ability to fulfil their own visions. In addition to these thoughts around motivation, while Klotz and Neubaum (2016) indicated how independence and autonomy were highlighted as positive influences, participants added further insights around how dominance and the opportunity for impact were also key in that they also provided further motivation within

the entrepreneurial journey. In addition to this, participants also highlighted how narcissistic traits influenced their levels of resilience, adaptability, and their ability to visualize their entrepreneurial goals, which also served as a motivation. Furthermore, participants mentioned the positive influence of the traits that impacted their ability to build relationships while increasing their loyalty. This was due to traits such as entitlement and superiority. With minimal literature covering these additional nuances, this can be considered an extension to the literature.

Another emerging insight in terms of the positive influence of narcissistic traits is linked to the critical role, almost dependence, that these traits have played in the entrepreneurial journey as described by the participants. This was indicated in the first-order coding process. While the literature has mentioned the importance of narcissism as a necessary psychological resource (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Navis & Ozbek, 2016), minimal literature has described the dependence that was implied in the findings that directly links narcissistic traits to the courage, resilience and motivation required to function within the entrepreneurial field. This is likely an area for future research, and will continue to extend the research around narcissism being a trait that explains entrepreneurship (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Liu et al., 2019).

One of the interview questions required participants to rank the identified narcissistic traits based on their perceptions of how influential each trait has been on their entrepreneurial journey. It was interesting to note that all the participants naturally responded in a positive context, giving their rankings based on positive influences and also how necessary the traits have been for them on their entrepreneurial journeys. An emerging insight is seen through the rankings where the participants ranked the 'inflated positive view of self' as the most influential trait, in that this trait was perceived to have the most important influence on the entrepreneurial journey and indirectly impacts other traits.

Due to overconfidence, an inflated sense of self as well as self-efficacy, participants found that they had courage that motivated them to maintain a positive image, to be dominant in their environments, to seek power, to behave in an entitled manner, and to seek recognition and praise. This extends the literature through highlighting the emphasis on this specific trait as playing a critical role in the entrepreneurial journey. It is also important to note that the 'exhibitionism' trait was also described as having a high influence on the entrepreneurial journey, however most of the discussions were related to exhibitionism being used specifically on the entrepreneur's business journey.

This is in contrast to most of the discussions around exhibitionism which focus on this trait being an influence due to the narcissistic entrepreneur's need to be visible, to be famous, to be recognized and to be seen (Twenge et al., 2008; Macenczak et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2019).

#### **6.4.2 Influence of identified narcissistic traits on the entrepreneur's business journey**

The findings from the interview data indicated in the second-order categories support the notion found in the literature that describes how entrepreneurs have learnt to channel narcissistic traits which are often deemed as negative into constructiveness (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Miller, 2015; Furnham, Furnham et al., 2013). This constructiveness has been described in several ways by participants, and the findings highlight the significant impact that the traits in question seem to have on business development and opportunities for entrepreneurs within their businesses. These positive influences in relation to the tangible impact on business was linked to all the identified traits, with the ability to access key narcissistic traits for the purposes of concluding business transactions being highlighted as a key advantage. While the literature does support this discussion in terms of referring to narcissism as whole (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Liu et al., 2019), there is limited literature that speaks directly and specifically to a deeper understanding that connects the identified narcissistic traits to the entrepreneurial journey.

Several elements have been described in literature as having positive influences on the entrepreneurial journey such as motivation, the willingness to take risk, as well as the ability to influence (Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Miller, 2015; Holland & Shepherd, 2015; Liu et al., 2019). The findings extend the literature through providing a deeper understanding of how the outcomes indicated as positive influences directly influence decision-making in business as well as business outcomes.

Risk-taking, which forms part of self-enhancement, continues to be highlighted as one of the highly influential traits, and participants expressed how the willingness to take risks resulted in increased exploration and the discovery of new markets, new industries and new businesses. This is in part supported by the literature, which highlights the reverence towards risk-taking that describes the entrepreneur's higher tolerance for uncertainty and a higher willingness to take risk (Miller, 2015; Foo, 2011; Holland & Shepherd, 2013). The literature also refers to a motivational influence for

progression linked to this exploration (Liu et al., 2019; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016).

A key discussion that also emerged from participants is the dependence on and the importance of risk. In line with the idea around the defiance of convention (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007), risk-taking has also positively influenced the courageous nature of entrepreneurs and encouraged them to venture into projects that were often considered implausible. This finding is supported by Miller's (2015) description of the willingness of entrepreneurs to take risk even in the face of probable failure. Participants described how this willingness to take risks often resulted in positive developments in their businesses. Courage also impacted their willingness to learn, and positively influenced entrepreneurs to seek guidance from others so as to progress their own businesses, increase their knowledge of new markets and new business processes, and encouraged them to source new business through addressing gaps in their environments.

The ability for entrepreneurs to sell themselves and their businesses well was one of the positive influences indicated in the literature (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016), and this ability was supported by the findings from the interview data. The extension to the literature is found in the details around how the traits influenced this outcome, and participants highlighted how being able to sell better was one of the key outcomes linked to narcissistic traits also impacting the ability to communicate better, to increase their personal profiles, and to build better positioned brands. Through increased knowledge, courage, the willingness to learn and the willingness to take risks, the identified traits have resulted in a connectivity that has highly influenced positive business progression for entrepreneurs. In line with this, participants also expressed how traits such as self-enhancement and an 'inflated positive view of self' have allowed for them to understand and find their value, and also be able to package and sell that value.

Influencing others in terms of the various stakeholders that entrepreneurs encounter, was also a finding that stood out as having several positive influences on the entrepreneurial journey. In the literature, influencing others is linked to some of the identified narcissistic traits including self-enhancement, an inflated positive view of self, and superiority (Navis & Ozbek, 2016, Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Hotchkiss, 2003; O'Reilly III et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2019), and the findings support the literature through the various ways in which influencing others was found to positively influence the business outcomes for entrepreneurs, whether it be clients,



customers, or internal team members and partners.

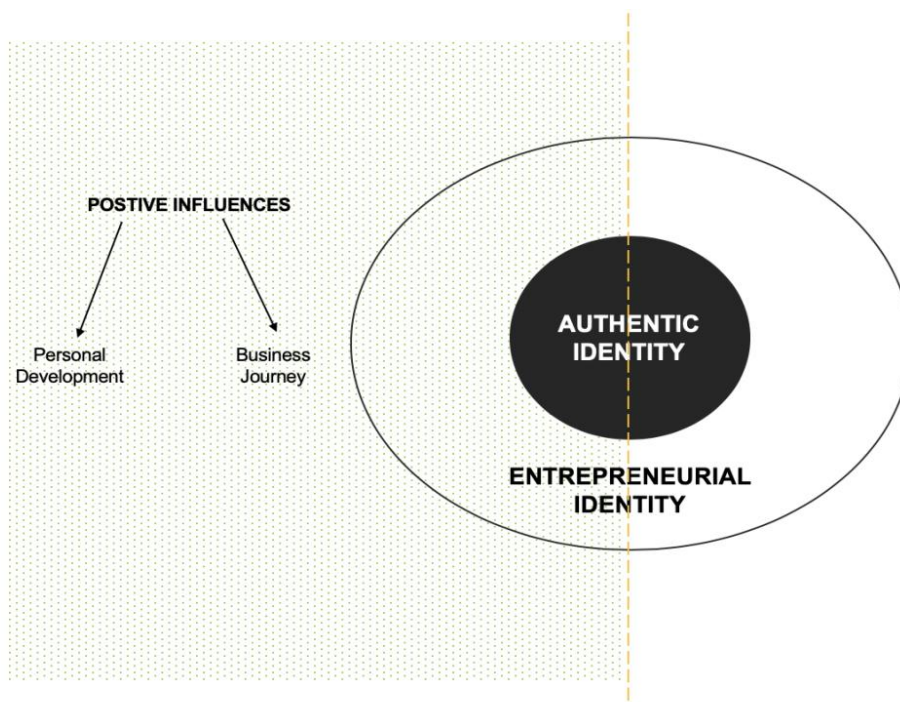
The literature refers to the ability of entrepreneurs to influence others in order to make others adopt to their plans, their thinking, and to get them to support and participate (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Hotchkiss, 2003; O'Reilly et al., 2014). This is also supported by the findings, where participants found that narcissistic traits helped with driving their own visions and ensuring people support those visions. The ability for narratives to inspire people was also expressed as a positive influence in the findings, where entrepreneurs used their experiences to craft their own narrative and thus influence those around them. Influencing others was also found to impact internal processes by participants, with influences of business culture as well as the creation of conducive environments for high-performance teams being highlighted as some of the positive influences.

The findings are also supported by an element within the literature that indicates the need for entrepreneurs to positively impact society beyond themselves (Wiklund et al., 2019; Dhahri & Omri, 2018). Participants expressed how the identified narcissistic traits such as superiority and entitlement resulted in them taking on great responsibility in order to ensure they contribute to seeking and executing a positive result on their communities.

#### **6.4.3 Conclusive Findings for Research Question 2**

The results provide a deeper understanding of the nuances around how the identified narcissistic traits have a strong and impactful influence on the entrepreneurial journey, specifically in relation to their influence on the entrepreneur's psychology through their personal development, as well as the entrepreneur's business journey. It was interesting to note how the different traits were linked and seemed to have a compound effect together that resulted in several areas being impacted, more especially courage, levels of confidence, the willingness to take risks, and on motivation. It is also interesting to note the dichotomy of the identified traits, and while Research Question 2 focused specifically on the positive influences, it can be seen in the discussion related to Research Question 3 how the same traits can have a completely different impact on the same entrepreneur. Figure 9 below illustrates how the entrepreneur's traits can have positive influences on personal development as well as the business journey as discussed in this section of the chapter. These influences are linked to a combination of the authentic and entrepreneur identities.

**Figure 9: Positive influences on the entrepreneur**



Source: Own compilation

### **6.5 Discussion of Results for Research Question 3**

**Research question 3: How are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) perceived to negatively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?**

Understanding the negative influences of the identified traits was interesting in that it further highlighted the complex nature of the connection between narcissism and entrepreneurship. DeNisi (2015) described the extreme nature of narcissistic traits as having the ability to lead to failure. The findings support this description, and through the two themes presented earlier, the findings will be discussed and unpacked in order to gain deeper insights into how the same identified traits that had made such positive impact on the entrepreneurial journey, can in the same vein result to impossible entrepreneurial challenges. The negative influence on the entrepreneur's personal development as well as the entrepreneur's business journey will be discussed further below.

### **6.5.1 Influence of identified narcissistic traits on the entrepreneur's personal development**

Overconfidence was often cited in the literature as having various negative influences including complacency and bad decision-making (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Al-Shammari et al., 2019). This is supported by the findings indicated in the first-order codes, where participants expressed how an inflated positive view of self, entitlement as well as superiority resulted in increased complacency, and a reduced attention to detail. This kind of complacency resulted in loss of clients and loss of business. The literature also describes how overconfidence can sometimes evolve into anxiety and denial (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016). This too was supported by the findings, where the participants expressed their issues around struggling between following through confidently on a vision due to frustrations, or allowing their anxiety and worry to take over when things are not falling into place.

Another finding linked to overconfidence and an inflated sense of self is related to how that trait has resulted in other stakeholders including clients and partners turning against the participants, which can also be associated with findings around the alienation of stakeholders (Miller, 2015). Participants described how the assumption of arrogance, superiority, and intimidation also resulted in loss of clients, which can be considered an extension to the literature.

Furthermore, in terms of alienating stakeholders, the literature describes the challenges around the engagement of people, and how manipulation, exploitation and taking credit away from others are common negative outcomes (Liu et al., 2019; Twenge et al., 2008). However, contrary to this literature, manipulation was less commonly expressed as a negative outcome as most of the participants expressed their difficulty with the practice of manipulation, and expressed that they often sought other ways to engage with people. While some saw manipulation as a common way to engage, exploitation was not referred to at all, and taking credit away from others was also not a discussion point. Engagement with others in terms of the disregarding of stakeholders as described by Miller (2015) was often only referred to in extreme scenarios related to bad business practices and mismanagement of appointed tasks by team members. Participants did however, in line with the literature, relate to a lack of patience and empathy with their stakeholders, often citing how narcissistic traits resulted in the disregard and disrespect of stakeholders.

Bélanger (2011) as well as Miller (2015) often described negative outcomes related to ruthlessness, aggressiveness and mistrust, and while some participants had a different experience of some of these negative influences, others related to these findings in the literature and often linked it to people struggling to align to them. The ability for others to adopt to their thinking was a consistent discussion that was in contention for participants. The frustration with people not aligning to their thinking also came out as one of the key issues in the research. This is in contradiction to the positive descriptions around the influential nature of narcissistic traits (Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Hotchkiss, 2003) in terms of the ability for those traits to influence people and convince them to adopt to the entrepreneur's vision.

The difficulty related to changing course and adjusting their visions was also a key negative influence highlighted by several participants. While there was an understanding of the importance of accepting unplanned outcomes, participants struggled often due to what they described as their focused nature and their difficulty when it comes to flexibility related to their visions. This was not a surprising outcome as this is in line with the literature that describes negative outcomes around disagreeableness, a lack of awareness when it comes to the need to adjust plans, as well as a lack of flexibility (Martinsen et al., 2019; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2011; Twenge et al., 2008).

Another negative influence highlighted in the literature is related to the entrepreneur's inability to accept criticism (Wales, Patel & Lumpkin, 2013; Navis & Ozbek, 2016). While participants' responses regarding criticism and feedback were aligned to this, there was an extension to the literature in that there were several participants who outlined the importance of gauging who feedback and criticism was coming from. Participants described a layered approach in terms of assessing the priority of feedback based on who it comes from, and this was a common discussion across most of the sample. This also touches on Miller's (2015) description related to the identified traits which highlights mistrust as a key outcome.

In further describing negative influences of the identified narcissistic traits, participants referred to challenges around the feeling of constant disappointment, often related to extremely high expectations and a struggle with gratitude based on high expectations. Another emerging insight was around how some participants battled with authenticity due to their entrepreneurial journeys sometimes requiring them to draw on characteristics that seemed unnatural to them. On the other hand, in understanding

how some traits have benefited them such as exhibitionism and the need for recognition, participants also highlighted how the negative side of this is the resultant debilitating need for praise, and linking this praise to success. With limited literature around this detail this can be considered another emerging insight that allows for a deeper understanding of the link between narcissistic traits and the negative influences of the entrepreneurial journey.

### **6.5.2 Influence of identified narcissistic traits on the entrepreneur's business journey**

The business impact based on the negative influences of the identified narcissistic traits provides some great insights that allow for a deeper understanding of the connection between narcissism and the entrepreneurial journey. This impact was common in the first-order codes and translated to several second-order categories. The literature highlights some of the areas in which entrepreneur's business practices have been impacted negatively by narcissistic traits. Complacency discussed earlier has resulted in a lack of attention to detail, as well as the mismanagement of outputs that have then resulted in dissatisfied clients and business losses.

Overconfidence, arrogance and entitlement have also resulted in negative business outcomes, where participants expressed how selective business pursuits have resulted in reduced business opportunities. This can be linked to the literature that describes issues around bad decision-making as well as egotistical behaviour (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; DeNisi, 2015; Hotchkiss, 2003). This egotistical behaviour was also linked to an ability to accept criticism and being disagreeable (Wales et al., 2013; Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Martinsen et al., 2019), and this was also supported by the findings where participants shared their struggles related to ignoring constructive feedback. This has resulted in stunted business growth, missed business opportunities, and the loss of clients.

Issues related to the managing of teams and other stakeholders were also expressed as being negatively influenced by narcissistic traits. Participants described how they often found themselves over-promising, overselling and pursuing projects that are out of scope. This has resulted in under-delivery, lack of capacity, and missed business opportunities. While the nuances contribute to an extension of the literature, these findings can also be supported by the literature which highlights bad decision-making as a challenge (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Al-Shammari et al., 2019).

While low empathy and a lack of connection with people was expressed as an expected negative influence of the identified narcissistic traits (O'Reilly III et al., 2014; Twenge et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2019), this outcome was not commonly expressed by participants. While a lack of connection to people was not expressed at all which was in contradiction with the literature, low empathy was often implied by some participants based on experiences with team members and other stakeholders in challenging situations. The focus on the vision and execution was often as expressed as critical, and when people got in the way of the fulfilment of those visions then participants had no issues with removing any obstacles, including people. This was more an expression of low empathy in line with a focus on vision and not necessarily in line with connections with people. Another element in the literature that was in contradiction to the findings is related to the description of narcissistic entrepreneurs having the tendency to cut corners and pursue illegitimate businesses (Miller, 2015; Navis & Ozbek, 2016). This finding was not supported within the findings of this study.

Miller's (2015) description of the possible outcomes related to micromanagement and increased mistrust were extended in the study. While some of the participants described how they often geared towards micromanagement when their teams were not aligning and doing what is expected, very often micromanagement would take place because of entrepreneurs enjoying and preferring a specific type of work. The literature is extended through the findings where participants expressed how a lack of alignment with stakeholders had further negative impact through reduce efficiencies in terms of business processes and outputs, as well as reduce team effectiveness.

The literature highlights one of the negative influences of narcissistic traits as resulting in risky financial decisions and investments (Foster et al., 2011; Navis & Ozbek, 2016), and while this was not a common finding, it was expressed by some of the participants as linked to bad decision-making which is also in line with insights expressed in the literature (Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Al-Shammari et al., 2019). Participants also expressed a common challenge around unnecessary adjustments to business plans based on overconfidence, self-enhancement through increased risk-taking, as well as a strong desire for attention, recognition and praise.

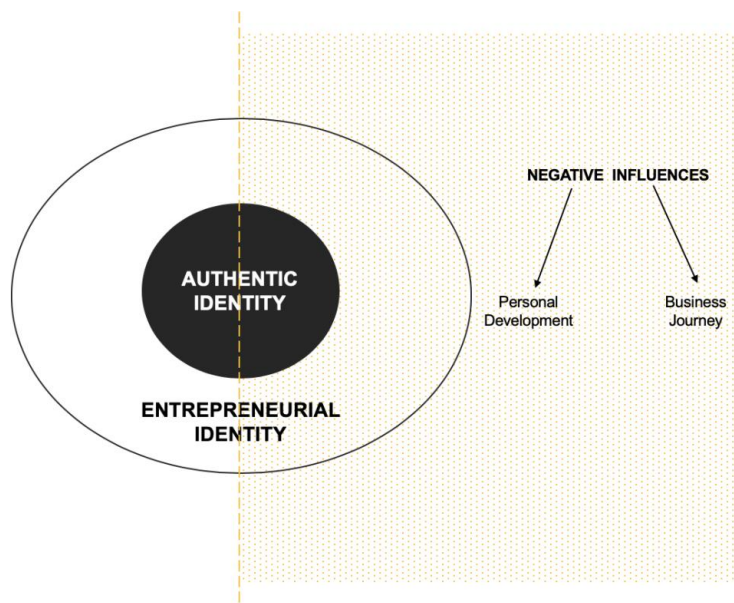
An emerging insight in the study was related to how exhibitionism negatively impacted the entrepreneurial journey through competitive behaviour. This is related to competitors behaving insincerely based on accessing narcissistic traits for business development purposes, which has inherently resulted in business losses. Another

competitor challenge based on exhibitionism is where competitors have been able to duplicate and imitate entrepreneurs' business outputs so as to source new clients, often resulting in business losses as well for the participants. Furthermore, in relation to exhibition, participants highlighted how the dependence on this trait for sourcing business had a negative influence not only in the adjustment of plans, but also in the difficulty in maintaining the momentum which negatively impacts business opportunities.

### **6.5.3 Conclusive Findings for Research Question 3**

The results further emphasize the complex nature of the identified narcissistic traits, which indicate how the same traits that showed such significant positive influences, can have significant negative influences on the same entrepreneur. The results highlighted again how the traits can have a completely different impact on the entrepreneurial journey, effecting the entrepreneur's personal development through frustration, overconfidence, manipulation, bad decision-making tendencies, and anxiety among other characteristics; along with the entrepreneur's business journey through resulting in opportunity losses, the loss of clients, a lack of alignment among internal stakeholders, increased inefficiencies, and more aggressive competitor behaviour. Figure 10 below illustrates how the entrepreneur's traits can have negative influences on personal development as well as on the business journey. Similarly, to the figure seen in the previous section (Figure 9, p. 96), these influences are linked to a combination of the authentic and entrepreneur identities.

**Figure 10: Negative influences on the entrepreneur**



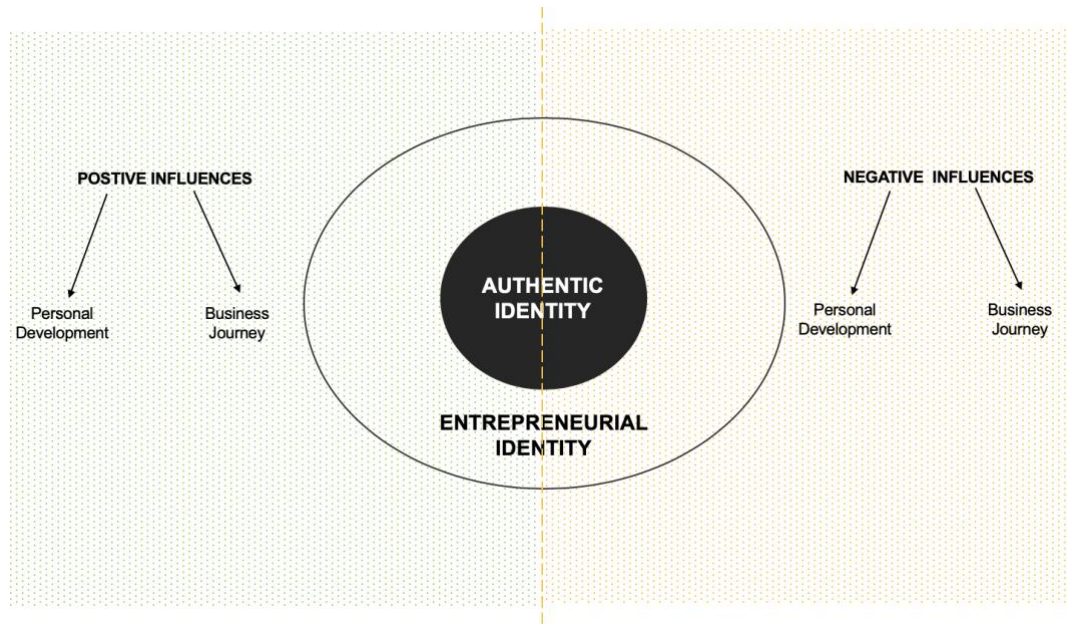
Source: Own compilation

## **6.6 Conclusion**

Through this qualitative research the research objectives were met in that the narcissistic traits among established entrepreneurs were found to be prevalent, and were also deeply explored in order to gain more insights around their influence and existence. The study also allowed for further exploration based on understanding some of the nuances related to how the same traits identified in the study can have positive and negative influences on the entrepreneurial journey. The complexity and interrelatedness of the identified narcissistic traits was explored and Figure 11 below illustrates a combination of the findings which are represented in a system of influence based on the multi-dimensionality of narcissistic traits when linked to entrepreneurship.



**Figure 11: A system of influence: narcissistic traits on the entrepreneurial journey**



Source: Own compilation

The first-order codes found in Figure 5 (Chapter 5, p. 75) summarize the findings that highlighted how the personal development of the entrepreneur as well as the business journey do not seem to be mutually exclusive, and actually seem to be integrated in terms of how they are influenced and the outcomes thereof. This is also the case in terms of the emerging insight indicated in the second-order categories around the Authentic identity and the Entrepreneurial identity, where they seem to interchange depending on the entrepreneur's circumstances and requirements. Through the development of the emerging themes from the study that are highlighted in Figure 5, it seems the entrepreneur has formed a dynamic personality that encompasses authentic and developed traits that allow them to survive, manage and flourish on their entrepreneurial journey.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The aim of the study was to explore the narcissistic traits of established entrepreneurs so as to gain a deeper insight on how these traits influence the entrepreneurial journey, as well as gaining perspective on how entrepreneurs have been impacted by those traits positively and negatively.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted so as to build an understanding for the work that currently exists within entrepreneurial personality research. More specifically, the literature review focused on gaining multiple perspectives on narcissism and how it plays a role in the entrepreneurial personality and journey. Studies done previously have provided insights into this relationship between narcissism and entrepreneurship (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016), however the focus previously has been on student or nascent entrepreneurs, and the studies have also been quantitative. This study was different in that it focused specifically on established entrepreneurs who are defined as those who have been actively practicing as owners or managers of their business for more than three and a half years (Bosma & Kelley, 2019). Furthermore, another key difference in this study is that the study was qualitative in nature and allowed for deeper exploration around the connection between narcissism and entrepreneurship based on those who have been on the journey for an established period of time.

The reasons for the necessity of this study were clear based on a thorough understanding of literature, current perspectives and debates, and studies that have formulated around the entrepreneurial personality, narcissism and other similar traits.

The interview schedule was developed using a derivative of the commonly-used Narcissism Personality Inventory (NPI) as a foundation (Ames et al., 2006), and data was collected from 12 participants. The researcher interviewed established entrepreneurs from diverse industries which included fashion and retail, events and hospitality, and digital media among others. In the thematic analysis of the data, the coding process produced 210 zero-order codes, which translated into first-order codes, second-order categories, and the emergent themes that highlight the key findings of the study.

## 7.2 A Recap of the Research Problem

The research problem was identified based on the knowledge gap that exists in gaining a deeper understanding of narcissism within the entrepreneurial personality. The entrepreneurial personality has been an area of continuous research due to the impact that personality traits have been found to have on the entrepreneurial process, entrepreneurial intentions as well as entrepreneurial behaviour (Liu et al., 2019; Leutner et al., 2019; Shirokova et al., 2016; Antoncic et al., 2015). Focusing on various psychological dimensions and behaviours in relation to the entrepreneurial personality has also been a growing area of research. More recently the focus has shifted to traits such as narcissism as there is a growing realization of the seemingly important role this trait plays in the field of entrepreneurship (Liu et al., 2019; Navis & Ozbek, 2016; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016, DeNisi, 2015; Klotz & Neubaum, 2016).

The aim of the research around entrepreneurial personalities is to achieve a more holistic and balanced view of the entrepreneurial characteristics (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013). This study stemmed from gaps found in previous studies that have aimed to explore nuances of the link between entrepreneurship and narcissism, specifically the role narcissism plays within entrepreneurship. Studies often called on future research to explore narcissistic traits within entrepreneurship further so as to broaden the understanding of the trait's role and significance, as well as to gain more insights based on entrepreneurs who have moved beyond the nascent phase of the journey. Qualitative studies were also found to be a gap due to most of the studies being based on quantitative studies (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Liu et al., 2019).

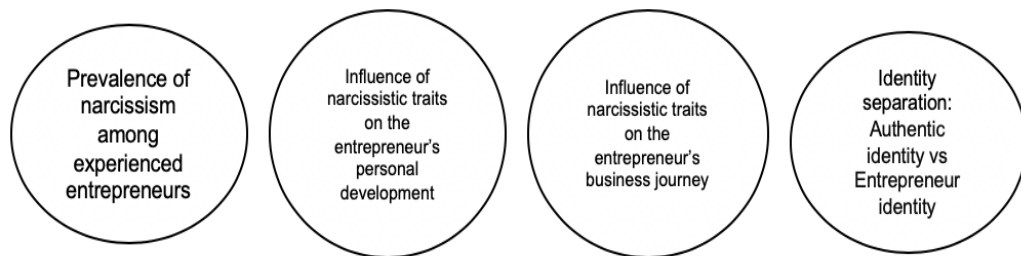
Gaining a deeper understanding of the seemingly significant role narcissism plays within entrepreneurship was important as well due to the need for contributions to the literature that will help to uncover further details about entrepreneurship and the growth of this field. This is important and impactful in a time where the growth of the entrepreneurial economy is critical not only in the context of business in terms of empowerment and increasing economic opportunities, but also in the context of impacting the emerging economy and transforming societies (Dhahri & Omri, 2018; Kuratko & Morris, 2018; Zahra et al., 2014).

The study focused on filling the identified gap so as to provide more insights on the impactful trait of narcissism within entrepreneurship.

### 7.3 Principal findings

The three research questions aimed to establish the prevalence of the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self, self-enhancement, superiority, entitlement, exhibitionism) among established entrepreneurs. The key themes that emerged from the data collection were illustrated in Figure 6 (presented in Chapter 6, p. 78):

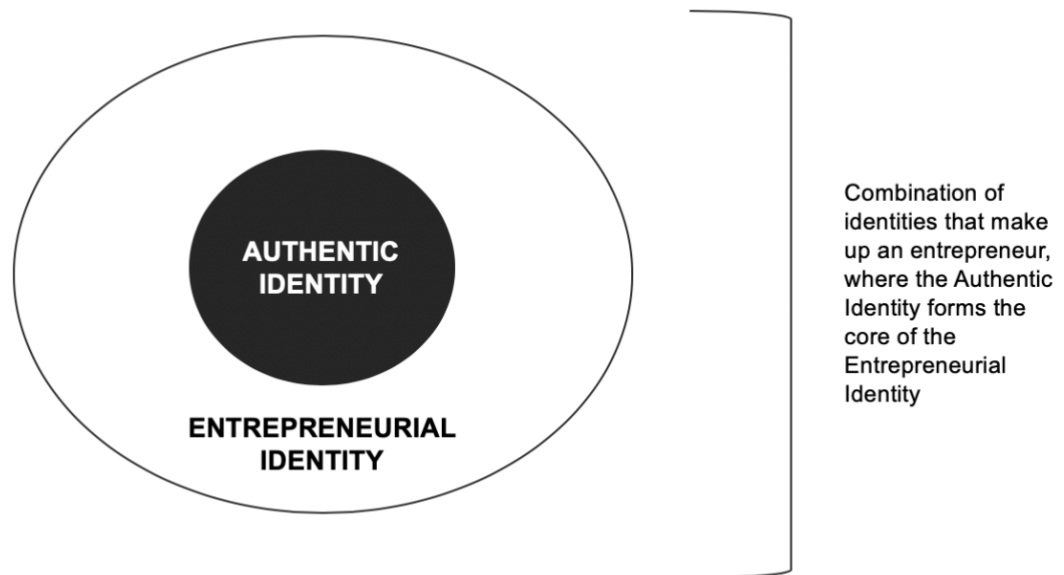
**Figure 6: Key themes that emerged from the coding process**



#### 7.3.1 Research Question 1

This research question aimed to establish and confirm if the narcissistic traits that were identified as the most significant in describing narcissism were prevalent among established entrepreneurs. The findings indicated that they were indeed prevalent, and some complexities and insights were introduced in terms of the levels of prevalence based on different entrepreneurs' experiences and perceptions. One of the more significant findings was related to a dynamic that was introduced that suggested an identity separation among established entrepreneurs, where participants often referred to their authentic personalities and their entrepreneurial personalities. They also implied having developed the ability to function between both identities and access the necessary narcissistic traits which have been helpful for them on their entrepreneurial journeys. Mathieu and St-Jean (2013) aptly described narcissism as "an underlying construct explaining entrepreneurship" (p. 528), and this aligns with the identification of the prevalence of narcissistic traits among established entrepreneurs. However, the dynamic introduced related to identity separation may also provide key insights into the prevalence of these traits. Figure 8 below (presented in Chapter 6, p. 89) illustrates the link between the Authentic Identity and the Entrepreneurial Identity.

**Figure 8: The link between the Authentic identity and the Entrepreneurial identity**



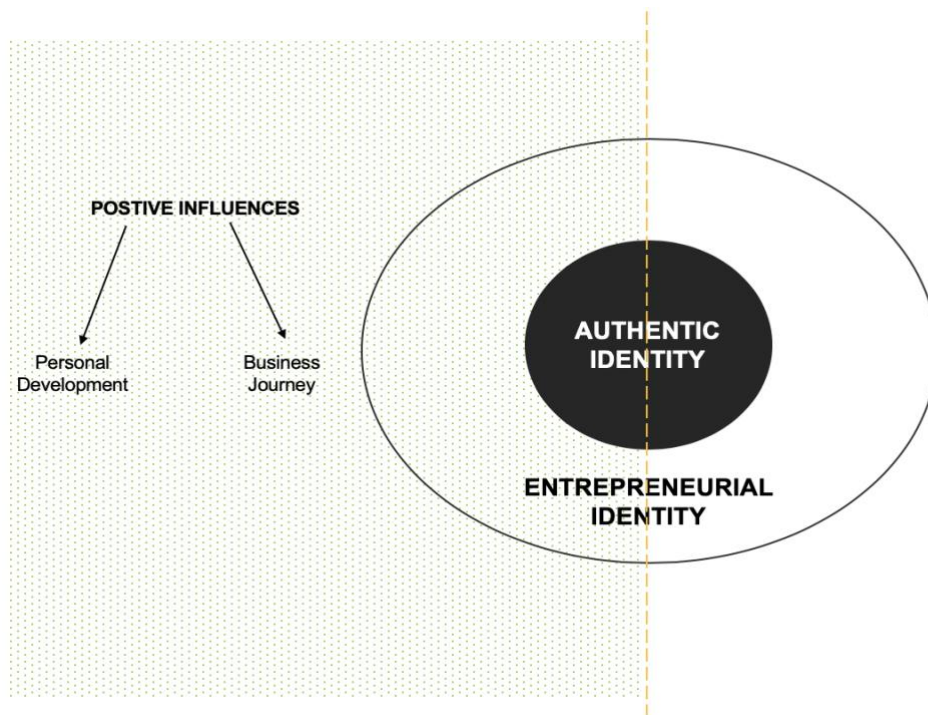
Source: Own compilation

### **7.3.2 Research Question 2**

The aim of this research question was to gain a deeper understanding of the details around the positive influences of the identified narcissistic traits, especially in line with the multi-dimensional nature of narcissism within entrepreneurship (Macenczak et al., 2016; Klotz & Neubaum, 2016; Judge, Piccolo & Kosalka, 2009). Two key themes that emerged were relevant to this research question, and these were related to the positive influence the narcissistic traits were found to have on the entrepreneurs' personal development as well as their business journey. The findings provided a deeper understanding that confirmed how the identified narcissistic traits are not only influential within the entrepreneurial journey, but also play a significant and impactful role for entrepreneurs especially in line with motivation, courage, the levels of confidence, and the willingness to take risks. These findings gave deeper insights into literature that has highlighted how narcissism plays a role in significantly influencing the journey of entrepreneurs (Mathieu & St-Jean, 2013; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Klotz & Neubaum,

2016; Liu et al., 2019; Navis & Ozbek, 2016), and it was interesting to gain insight into how the dynamic introduced in the previous research question around the separation between authentic and entrepreneurial identities also played a role in the depth of understanding of the positive influences that were explored in the study. Figure 9 below (presented in Chapter 6, p. 96) visually depicts the positive influences of the identified narcissistic traits on the entrepreneurial journey.

**Figure 9: Positive influences on the entrepreneur**



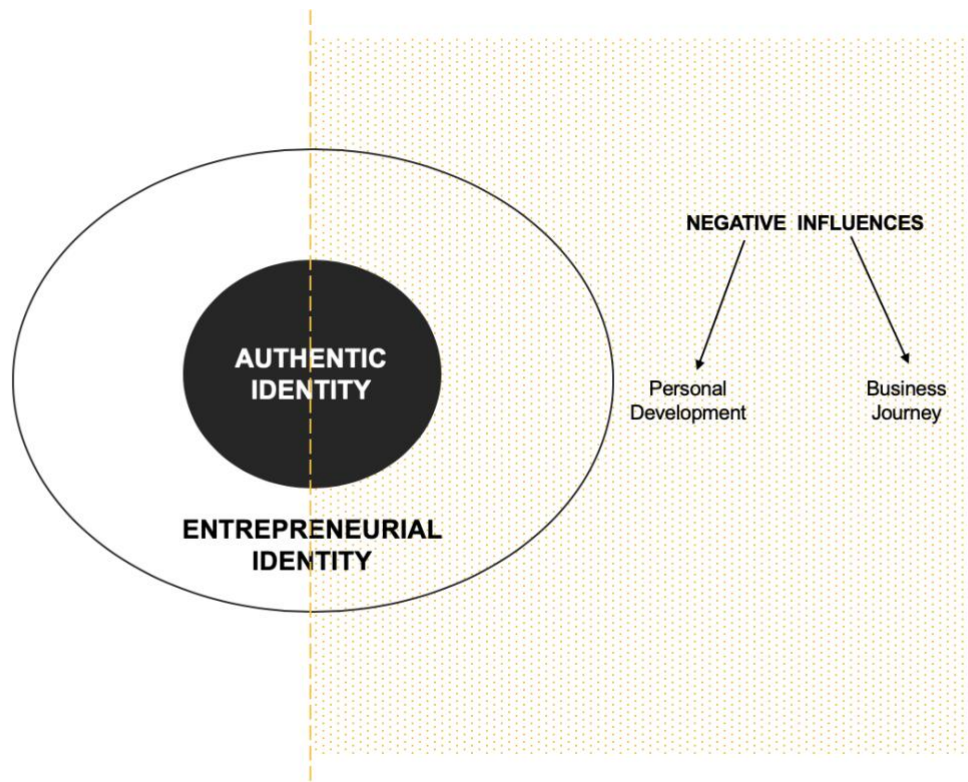
Source: Own compilation

### 7.3.3 Research Question 3

The aim of this research question was to gain a deeper understanding of how the identified narcissistic traits were also found to have negative influences on the entrepreneurial journey. Similarly, to research question 2, the identified traits were also found to have significant negative influences on the entrepreneurs' personal development and business journey, which is indicated by two of the key themes. This is in line with the literature which suggests the complex nature of the connection between narcissism and entrepreneurship (DeNisi, 2015; Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Navis & Ozbek, 2016), and how the negative influences identified can have an impact on the

entrepreneur's journey based on frustration, overconfidence, manipulation, bad decision-making tendencies, as well as anxiety, among other influential characteristics. Figure 10 below (presented in Chapter 6, p. 102) illustrates the negative influences of the identified narcissistic traits on the entrepreneurial journey.

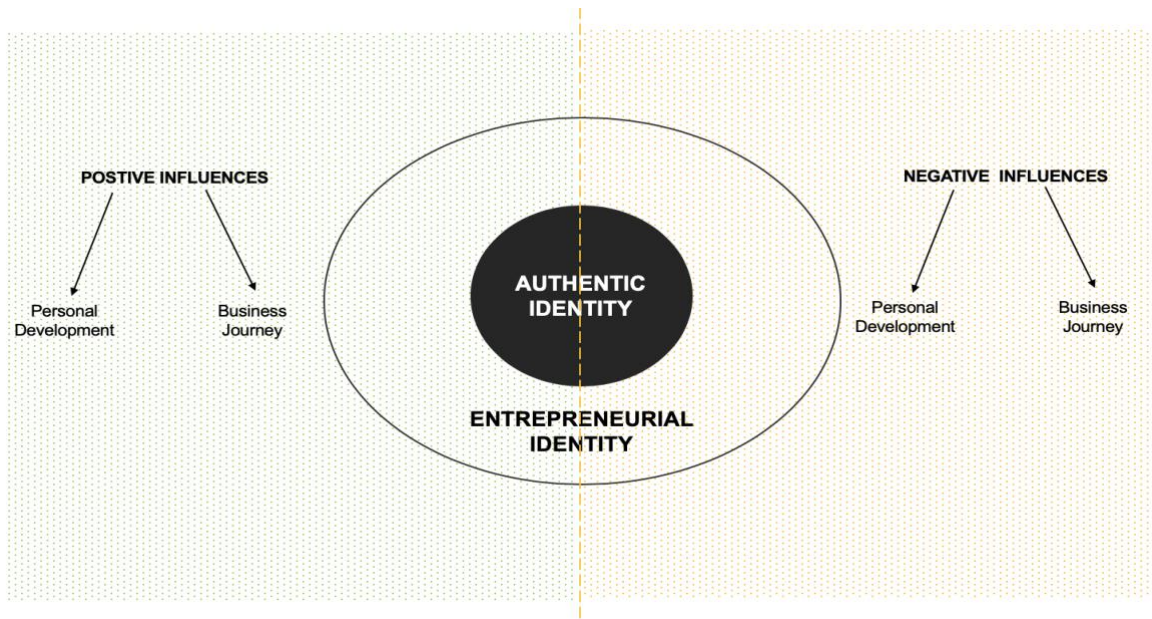
**Figure 10: Negative influences on the entrepreneur**



Source: Own compilation

A system of influence based on the combination of findings from the research questions was developed, which represented the dynamic related to the authentic and entrepreneurial identities, as well as the complexity of the narcissistic traits in line with how the same traits can have significant influences on the entrepreneurial journey, both positive and negative. The figure related to this system of influence that was presented in Chapter 6 (p. 103) is presented again below.

**Figure 11: A system of influence: narcissistic traits on the entrepreneurial journey**



Source: Own compilation

Figure 11 above summarizes one of the key findings of the study, that the established entrepreneur has actively learned through their journey and developed a dynamic personality that encompasses authentic and developed traits that they draw on to function and succeed on their entrepreneurial journey.

#### **7.4 Theoretical and practical contributions**

This study contributed to the continuous literature related to the entrepreneurial personality, more especially the emerging literature around the role of narcissism within entrepreneurship. The theoretical and practical contributions per research question are discussed below:

##### **7.4.1 Contributions: Research Question 1**

The study contributed to the existing literature through providing insights on the dynamic that involved the development of an authentic identity and an entrepreneurial identity. The study explored the ability for entrepreneurs to not only be aware of the active separation of these identities, but also to access them accordingly based on their perceptions and the outcomes they require as entrepreneurs at a specific point in time.

The practical contributions based on this research question are related to increasing knowledge and insights on entrepreneurs that allows for more important information for



management, scholars, and policymakers in relation to identifying and nurturing entrepreneurs. This also helps with the development of practicing entrepreneurs and may help entrepreneurial development agencies with the upskilling of entrepreneurs so as to contribute to their improved progress on the entrepreneurial journey. This is critical in a market that is considered to have the lowest levels of entrepreneurial activity consistently (Herrington et al., 2017), while also grappling with rising unemployment numbers (Stats SA, 2019). In training and developing entrepreneurs, it is important for the influential narcissistic traits to be highlighted and explored in detail as part of an entrepreneurs' development. The significance of learning how to use narcissistic traits as tools for entrepreneurial success have been highlighted as highly influential and would be key for those developing entrepreneurs to apply.

#### **7.4.2 Contributions: Research Question 2**

The theoretical contributions from this research question are linked to providing deeper insights around the nuances and details related to the positive influences of narcissistic traits on the entrepreneurial journey. These influences were initially indicated by scholars who discussed the positive nature of narcissism within entrepreneurship (Hmieleski & Lerner, 2016; Liu et al., 2019; Navis & Ozbek, 2016), and the exploration of further details around the positive influences provides a greater understanding of narcissism within entrepreneurship.

Practically, the findings contribute to creating an understanding of how narcissistic traits can be used to gain a competitive advantage for entrepreneurs, and also how they play an important motivational role for entrepreneurs as they aim to survive within the entrepreneurial field. This entails understanding how to hone different narcissistic traits for positive influences that develop entrepreneurs, while also contributing to their business development and opportunity realization. These are important insights that can be applied practically, specifically for business leaders, scholars, policy makers and investors. This includes stakeholders who fund and source partnerships with entrepreneurs, and whose work involves having a deeper understanding of the motivations of entrepreneurs so as to gauge their likelihood of success. This research is also helpful in providing further details to different elements of the entrepreneurial personality that allow for a better understanding of what instigates courage, perseverance, and much-needed motivation on the challenging entrepreneurial journey.

### **7.4.3 Contributions: Research Question 3**

The theoretical contributions for this research question provide insights into the multidimensionality of narcissism within entrepreneurship, and provide scholars further areas of understanding and exploration related to the entrepreneurial personality and how different traits influence the entrepreneurial journey. The findings were found to have impact on entrepreneurs psychologically in terms of their personal development, and also on their business journey. This contributes to the literature on the negative influences on narcissism through additional information and perspectives, as well as a model that highlights the influences on entrepreneurial psychology along with the business journey.

Practically, the findings also contribute to scholars, business leaders, investors and policy makers in building a deeper understanding of how traits that may be considered in one way can actually have a significantly influential outcomes in other ways, specifically in negative ways in line with this research question. The stakeholders discussed are encouraged to explore the nuances around the narcissistic personality traits and how they can have negative outcomes unintentionally, and work to mitigate the negative influences while encouraging the positive influences. In terms of investors and entrepreneurial development agencies, understanding how the negative aspects of entrepreneurship such as the high frequency of mistakes, failure and rejection can be used practically for the purposes of learnings, personal development and positive application can be useful in providing the necessary support structures for entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, in terms of the sourcing of entrepreneurs, the research has also highlighted the importance of not limiting this sourcing to the 'entrepreneurial personality', and instead, understanding the intricacies of personalities and people's experiences that can make them more likely to survival and growth in the entrepreneurship field. The opportunity to access narcissism as a tool provides an additional layer to recruitment of entrepreneurs and also provides a variety to the types of people who would be considered as likely individuals to succeed as entrepreneurs.

For the entrepreneurs themselves, this research helps to provide insights into how entrepreneurs can manage the positive and negative influences of their own narcissistic traits, and how to manage the negative while accessing the positive ones. The ability to provide awareness in terms of the influences of personality on

entrepreneurship can allow for significant competitive advantages to be gained through building a greater understanding that will not only be useful for the purposes of awareness, but even more so for practical application in the entrepreneurial journey.

### **7.5 Limitations of the research**

While the researcher attempted to mitigate the expected limitations in terms of interviewer, interpreter and response bias (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Zikmund et al., 2013; Saunders & Lewis, 2018), there are still some limitations to the study.

The study was conducted with a limited number of interviews, and was carried out with 12 participants being a part of the study. Therefore, there was likely sample bias. Furthermore, sample bias is also likely due to a limited representation of ethnic groups. While this number was ideal enough for exploration as per the initial research purposes, it is difficult to generalise the findings based on limited perspectives. Therefore, the generalisability of the study is limited.

A further limitation could have occurred due to the subject matter, the various points in the interview in which definitions and understanding of content had to be clarified, as well as the way in which all the interviews were conducted which was telephonic. This could have resulted in interpretation and response bias due to the depth of discussions in the interviews as well as the questions that needed defining and clarity of scope, there could be interpreter and interviewer bias that could have also taken place. Finally, the model of the authentic self and the entrepreneur self was conceptual in its nature based on the participants' responses, and was not tested empirically.

### **7.6 Suggestions for future research**

The study provided further insights into the connection between narcissism and entrepreneurship, and also provided insights that allowed for the building of a better understanding of the entrepreneurial personality. With the theoretical contribution related to identity separation based on the authentic and the entrepreneurial identities within established entrepreneurs, there is an opportunity for further research based on gaining more insights specific to this dynamic and if it applies beyond this study. Also, with the prevalence of narcissism being linked to specifically identified traits, there is also scope for further research based on confirming narcissism being based on those traits identified in this study.

In terms of the contributions related to the positive and negative influences based on the findings on the influence on the entrepreneur's personal development and business journey, there is scope for further research in terms of further exploration on the influences from narcissistic traits and how to manage their outcomes, more so related to mitigating negative influences and enhancing the positive influences. There is also scope for future research in terms of gaining further insights on the practical implications that aim to continue to establish narcissism as one of the key personality traits for entrepreneurs. Further research can give greater attention to the context-specific influences of the narcissistic traits and how to enhance the positive outcomes of the related constructs. In addition, the system of influence developed in this study has grounds for further testing and validation.

The context of the study was based on a limited sample size and a limited diversity range, therefore there is also an opportunity to open up this kind of exploratory study to further ethnic groups within the scope of established entrepreneurs. A future suggestion also includes increasing the sample size in a similar study. Furthermore, conducting this kind of study in different geographical territories may also provide deeper and more diverse entrepreneurial insights from other developing and developed countries.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

This chapter summarized the main findings, highlighting the key outcomes in the exploration of the connection and influence of narcissism and the entrepreneurial journey. Some of the implications for management and other key stakeholders were also discussed. The limitations of the study were outlined, along with some suggestions for future research.

With the entrepreneurship field continuing to be a key area of interest for researchers due to its importance in society, as well as the necessary and sought-after growth of the entrepreneurial economy, this type of research lifts the veil on the entrepreneurship field as well as entrepreneurial personalities. This brings about insights that provide a greater understanding that will allow for more focused development in the field, as well as a more nuanced management of the entrepreneurial journey for the purposes of longevity and success. This research study hopes to have provided a meaningful contribution to the growing and necessary literature related to gaining a deeper understanding of the complex entrepreneurial personality and journey.

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## APPENDICES

### 9.1 Appendix 1: Informed consent letter

#### **Informed Consent Letter: Interview Request**

Dear Sir/Madam

I am currently studying for an MBA at the Gordon's Institute of Business Science (GIBS) University of Pretoria. I am conducting research to better understand the entrepreneurial personality and how individual traits have played a negative or positive role in one's entrepreneurial journey over time.

The interview is expected to last about an hour, and the information and insights gained through this interview will help me to have a deeper understanding of which personality traits play a significant role in an entrepreneur's journey, and how those traits have positively or negatively influenced entrepreneurs navigate this challenging field.

Please may you kindly indicate if you are willing to participate in this study by signing below. Please be informed that your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. Your permission is requested to record the interview for the purposes of transcribing for analysis, however, recording is voluntary and you may choose to not be recorded. All data will be kept confidential and information or quotations used will not be directly linked to your name or company, as all information will be anonymous. All data will be stored without identifiers to preserve confidentiality.

If you have any concerns, please contact myself or my supervisor. Our details are provided below. As an indication of consent please sign below.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

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## 9.2 Appendix 2: Consent Form

### **Consent Form**

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

1. I confirm that I understand what the research is about and I have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without giving reason
3. I agree to take part in the research
4. I agree to my interview being audio recorded
5. I agree to the use of my anonymised quotations in publications

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



### **9.3 Appendix 3: Interview Guideline**

#### Interviewer Notes:

- Introduction
- Request to record the interview
- State the purpose of the research: The purpose of the research is to gain a deeper understanding of the entrepreneurial personality and how individual traits have played a negative or positive role in one's entrepreneurial journey. The traits that will be discussed today are pre-determined based on research.
- Assurance of confidentiality

#### **Section A: Demographic questions**

Name:

Age:

Business name:

What is your core business?

Where does the business operate?

When did you start the business?

**Section B:**

<b>Research Question 1:</b>		
<b>Are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) prevalent among established entrepreneurs during their entrepreneurial journey?</b>		
	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>
	inflated positive view of self	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you believe you are good at what you do?</li> <li>2. Do people tell you often about how good you are? Do you agree?</li> <li>3. There are normal/ ordinary people, and there are special/ extraordinary people. Where do you think you fall? Please elaborate?</li> <li>4. Do you feel you always know what you are doing? [Or do you often feel you don't know what you are doing?]</li> <li>5. Do you believe you're more capable than other people? Do you think you learn a lot from other people?</li> <li>6. Do you think you are good at selling yourself and/or your business? Elaborate</li> <li>7. If someone described you as a visionary, would you agree or disagree? Why?</li> <li>8. "My overconfidence has let me down" – have you ever felt this phrase applying to your experience? Elaborate</li> <li>9. How often do you make bad decisions when it comes to your business?</li> </ol>
	self-enhancement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you feel when people compliment you?</li> <li>2. How easy is it for you to get people to do what you want them to do?</li> <li>3. Do you find it easy or difficult to manipulate people? How does it make you feel?</li> <li>4. With all the experiences you have, do you think everyone enjoys hearing your stories?</li> <li>5. Do you think you can make people believe anything you want them to?</li> <li>6. Does the maintenance of a positive view of yourself from others motivate you in any way? How?</li> <li>7. Would you describe yourself as a risk-taker? Why?</li> <li>8. If yes, how has being a risk-taker influenced your journey as an entrepreneur?</li> </ol>

	superiority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you feel about authority and hierarchy within an organization?</li> <li>2. Do you prefer having authority over people or do you prefer following orders?</li> <li>3. Do you feel people often recognize your authority? How does it feel to you when they don't?</li> <li>4. Do you enjoy being the leader of your organization? Why?</li> <li>5. Do you feel that leading your own organization has played any role in motivating you on your journey as an entrepreneur?</li> <li>6. How do you manage your stakeholders when you are not aligned?</li> <li>7. When your team is not doing things the way you want, how do you handle that?</li> <li>8. Are you a micro-manager or macro-manager? Why do you think this?</li> </ol>
	entitlement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you believe you get the respect that you deserve?</li> <li>2. How do you make sure that you get the respect you deserve?</li> <li>3. Do you have a lot of expectations of other people?</li> <li>4. How difficult or easy is it for you to change course when you have a clear goal?</li> <li>5. How do you take feedback on your business?</li> <li>6. How do you know when you need to make real adjustments to your plans?</li> </ol>
	exhibitionism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you feel when you get a lot of attention?</li> <li>2. How important is it to you that people recognize the work you have done?</li> <li>3. How do you feel about highlighting your achievements?</li> <li>4. When having the choice between showing off or not showing off, what do you lean towards? Why?</li> <li>5. Does getting recognition and praise for your work motivate you? How?</li> </ol>

**Research Question 2:**

**How are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) perceived to positively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?**

<b>Interview Questions</b>	1. In referring to the identified traits, discuss how these traits have positively influenced your journey as an entrepreneur.
	<i>[Note: if the respondent feels the trait does not apply to them, make a note of that and move to next trait.]</i>
	2. If you were given 100 points to allocate to the identified traits, how would you allocate them according to how they have impacted your career as an entrepreneur? [the more points, the more important]  [Note: This question should be asked last after the question linked to research question 3 has been followed up with the first question in this section. ]
<b>Research Question 3:</b>	
<b>How are the identified narcissistic traits (an inflated positive view of self; self-enhancement; superiority; entitlement; and exhibitionism) perceived to negatively influence the entrepreneurial journey of established entrepreneurs?</b>	
	1. In referring to the identified traits, discuss how these traits have negatively influenced your journey as an entrepreneur.  <i>[Note: if the respondent feels the trait does not apply to them, make a note of that and move to next trait.]</i>

To be used for interview questions in research question 2.1 and 3.1:

<b>Narcissistic traits</b>	<b>Positively influenced</b>	<b>Negatively influenced</b>
inflated positive view of self		
self-enhancement		
superiority		

entitlement		
exhibitionism		

**To be used for interview questions in research question 2.2:**

<b>Traits</b>	<b>Points</b>
inflated positive view of self	
self-enhancement	
superiority	
entitlement	
exhibitionism	

## 9.4 Appendix 4: Ethical Clearance Approval

**Gordon  
Institute  
of Business  
Science**  
University  
of Pretoria

05 November 2019

Sphumelele Sibeko

Dear Sphumelele

*Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.*

*You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.*

*Please note that approval is granted based on the methodology and research instruments provided in the application. If there is any deviation change or addition to the research method or tools, a supplementary application for approval must be obtained*

*We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.*

*Kind Regards*

GIBS MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee

## 9.5 Appendix 5: Code list

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Self vs industry</li> <li>○ Importance of client referrals</li> <li>○ In between ordinary and special</li> <li>○ Industry impacting sense of self</li> <li>○ Info-based decision-making</li> <li>○ Motivation through passion</li> <li>○ Sense of entitlement</li> <li>○ Learning from specific experienced group</li> <li>○ Self-assurance re work</li> <li>○ Focus on work vs seeking recognition</li> <li>○ Struggle with Exhibitionism</li> <li>○ Not reaching potential</li> <li>○ Frequency of bad decisions</li> <li>○ Self vs clients</li> <li>○ Difficulty with compliments</li> <li>○ Confidence in ability influence people</li> <li>○ Ease of manipulation</li> <li>○ Importance of failure</li> <li>○ Importance of being a seller</li> <li>○ Clarity of entrepreneurial goal</li> <li>○ Importance of good reputation</li> <li>○ Calculating Risk</li> <li>○ Hating authority &amp; hierarchy</li> <li>○ Importance of authority &amp; hierarchy</li> <li>○ Preference for authority</li> <li>○ Negative side of authority not being recognized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Frustration with being a leader</li> <li>○ Management of stakeholders - action</li> <li>○ Importance of communication</li> <li>○ Frustration with people not aligning in thinking</li> <li>○ Preference for delegation</li> <li>○ Getting no respect from industry</li> <li>○ Work speaking for itself</li> <li>○ Having high expectations of others</li> <li>○ Importance of exceeding expectations</li> <li>○ Importance of impact</li> <li>○ Difficulty with changing course</li> <li>○ Sceptic regarding feedback</li> <li>○ Importance of understanding outcomes</li> <li>○ Difficulty with attention</li> <li>○ Importance of recognition</li> <li>○ Highlight business vs self</li> <li>○ Preference for authentic recognition</li> <li>○ Confidence in ability</li> <li>○ Filling a gap in market</li> <li>○ Confidence being a motivator for action</li> <li>○ Impact of ego on business</li> <li>○ Negative impact of ego on business</li> <li>○ Self conviction impacting action</li> <li>○ Being held to high standard with no capacity</li> <li>○ Passion driving conviction</li> <li>○ Negative impact of not dominating environment</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Negative impact of entitlement</li> <li>○ Positive impact of Exhibitionism</li> <li>○ Lack of need for validation from others</li> <li>○ Most impactful trait in entrepreneurship</li> <li>○ Self doubt</li> <li>○ View of self as ordinary</li> <li>○ Importance of perseverance</li> <li>○ Belief in everyone's abilities</li> <li>○ Self-assurance re strength in sales</li> <li>○ Seeing self as visionary</li> <li>○ Appreciation of compliments</li> <li>○ Difficulty with manipulation</li> <li>○ Separate business from self</li> <li>○ Personal capacity - follow authority</li> <li>○ Not wanting to manage people</li> <li>○ Commanding respect</li> <li>○ Enjoying leadership</li> <li>○ Motivation though leadership</li> <li>○ Management of stakeholders - difficulty</li> <li>○ Handling team members</li> <li>○ Respect from clients</li> <li>○ Ease of changing course</li> <li>○ Enjoying attention</li> <li>○ Not wanting to be the face of the business</li> <li>○ Taking on work with no capacity</li> <li>○ Dominating the environment as motivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Self-confidence - presence</li> <li>○ Belief in being better than others</li> <li>○ Importance of being adaptable</li> <li>○ Not believing in being a visionary</li> <li>○ The need for manipulation</li> <li>○ Not enjoying telling stories</li> <li>○ Need for validation</li> <li>○ Motivation through validation</li> <li>○ Preference to make final decision</li> <li>○ Not preferring authority or delegation</li> <li>○ Giving respect to get respect</li> <li>○ Importance of recognition for client growth</li> <li>○ Sharing of successes as a highlight</li> <li>○ Not seeking recognition</li> <li>○ Overconfidence being used against you</li> <li>○ Importance of making decisions</li> <li>○ Seeing self as extraordinary</li> <li>○ Awareness of being ahead</li> <li>○ Frustration due to being too far ahead</li> <li>○ Drawing on guidance from others</li> <li>○ People having different drive and vision</li> <li>○ Being discerning about learning from others vs experience</li> <li>○ Uncertain about ability to sell</li> <li>○ Difficulty with selling self</li> <li>○ Importance of exhibition</li> <li>○ Not overconfident</li> </ul>
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- Acceptance of unplanned outcomes
- Ability to inspire others
- Importance of showing your struggle
- Importance of stakeholders
- Handling team members with empathy
- Importance of respect for work done
- Importance of thinking ahead
- Importance of feedback
- Difficulty with highlighting achievements
- Sceptic regarding praise
- Struggle with entitlement
- Lack of need for exhibitionism
- Using others to sell self
- Lack of confidence
- Positive impact of Overconfidence
- Enjoying sharing stories
- Having high expectations of self
- Importance of support structure
- Preference for leadership
- Ability to challenge leadership
- Self moderation
- Understanding responsibility to others
- Negatives of Risk-taking
- Preference for recognition vs respect
- Clarity on who you want respect from
- Desire to teach

- Motivation through recognition
- Belief in positive impact
- Negative of recognition - Fear of peaking too early
- Issues with perfectionism
- Lack of satisfaction due to need for validation
- Lack of need for power
- Highly impactful trait in entrepreneurship
- Importance of resilience
- Not relying on people for favours
- Struggle with uncertainty
- Importance of getting to know team
- Importance of vision
- Micro-managing due to passion
- Lack of need for respect
- Frustration with people not behaving like them
- Lost opportunity due to assumed success
- Positive impact of entitlement
- Being both ordinary and special
- Being treated as threat due to high potential
- Importance of guiding others
- Challenge with hierarchy
- Balancing the need to exert power
- Seeing the vision come to life
- Leadership teaching humility
- Thinking people are as capable as them
- Preference for constructive feedback

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Understanding when to change course</li> <li>○ Importance of maintaining positive image</li> <li>○ Dominance causing complacency</li> <li>○ Getting constant validation</li> <li>○ Uniqueness leading to success</li> <li>○ Feeling empowered from learning</li> <li>○ Motivated by opportunity</li> <li>○ Issue with people taking credit on their own</li> <li>○ Embracing validation</li> <li>○ Importance of celebrating others</li> <li>○ Biggest mistakes linked to finances</li> <li>○ Preference for sharing stories intimately</li> <li>○ Under-utilising ability to sell</li> <li>○ Positives of Risk-taking</li> <li>○ Preference for micro-management</li> <li>○ Changing course due to intuition</li> <li>○ No emotions re highlighting achievements</li> <li>○ Negative impact of Overconfidence</li> <li>○ Negative - confidence only being linked to success</li> <li>○ Dominating environment through customer-centricity</li> <li>○ Negatives of power</li> <li>○ People spreading negative information</li> <li>○ More capable than others but restricted</li> <li>○ Doubting ability to influence people</li> <li>○ Willingness to take risk</li> <li>○ Doing things themselves due to stakeholder challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Struggle with personal attachment to business</li> <li>○ Incompetence dominating industry</li> <li>○ Weakness in sales</li> <li>○ Preference for unplanned outcomes</li> <li>○ Threaten so as to get things done</li> <li>○ Using common interests for connection</li> <li>○ Encouraging an exploratory environment</li> <li>○ Self-motivation</li> <li>○ Respect through fear</li> <li>○ Lack of need for attention</li> <li>○ Showing off for intimidation purposes</li> <li>○ Power resulting in self assurance</li> <li>○ Importance of self-belief</li> <li>○ Complexity of seeing self as extraordinary</li> <li>○ Stories an important part of sales</li> <li>○ Motivated by autonomy</li> <li>○ Preference for autonomous teams</li> <li>○ Opportunity in delegation</li> <li>○ Preference for leading through others</li> <li>○ Motivated by being able to fulfill potential</li> <li>○ Firing people that have to be micro-managed</li> <li>○ Getting respect through providing value</li> <li>○ Building credibility within your team</li> <li>○ Importance of being ahead for credibility</li> <li>○ Need for recognition negatively influencing business decisions</li> <li>○ Positives of self-enhancement</li> <li>○ Negatives of Exhibitionism</li> <li>○ Motivation through execution</li> </ul>
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