

# Being a teenager in 2018, more pressure than peer pressure

 By Leigh Andrews

10 Sep 2018

The fourth session of the UCT Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing's Youth Report 2018 release, also presented by Martin Neethling, director of groceries at Pioneer Foods, shared insight into the pressures SA's youth are really under - there's more to it than just 'being a teenager'.



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UCT Unilever Institute's primary research on a sample of 1,833 18- to 24-year-olds showed that the theme that best describes the mood or contemporary youth experience of the group is pressure, no matter their household income. They feel the pressure and worry about the pressure they are under.

It's pressure on yourself to be the best you can be, especially as the digital revolution is here.



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This segued into the next topic of the morning: startup pressures, with Neethling addressing six key pressures facing the South African youth in 2018.

Of these, Neethling said the first is **family pressure**, with over half of the study's sample saying their parents do not understand the pressure they are under – the daily pressure and stresses of school.

This may sound familiar but Neethling confirms it's a "different kind of hard," as these are often the children of the struggle generation, with parents who say they won freedom for them, which the youth are now wasting. They're also aware that it's not long before they will be in a caregiving role themselves.



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The second pressure is that of **community**: The youth often feel they are living a double life, with the tension of formality and informality, of local heritage and global aspiration.

The easiest example of this is when their university life is drastically separate from their home life, meaning they need to transition constantly from one set of circumstances to another, in terms of both language and behaviour.



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Third, is the one most of us are familiar with: **peer pressure**, but in 2018 it's more intuitive – what your friends think and say about you is a real hot button. You need to stand out and by doing what your peers are not – being extreme.

There's pressure to look good, to be well, to fit in. Respondents said they often pretend to be OK, particularly online, to save face and hide their vulnerabilities, so it's linked to self-esteem.

This rolls into the fourth form of pressure: **remaining relevant**.

## Fomo and phubbing

This is captured in Fomo or the Fear of Missing Out and the ubiquitous nature of 'being on', in case we miss something. As a result, there are high levels of engagement throughout the day on social media, no matter the time.

It's a case of constantly splitting their attention whether that's while on their commute, watching TV, interacting with family or studying.



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Neethling said this has definitely led to the rise of 'content driving content', and watching certain TV shows just because they start trending on Twitter, and well as 'phubbing' or phone snubbing – that's when you're on your phone while around family, friends or colleagues in real life.

For the older generation, the person in front of you took precedence, while the younger set say the person they are 'already talking to on the phone' takes precedence.

Think of the levels of hate speech out there. Think of that relief you often feel that social media wasn't around when you were at school. And we don't even know the half of it.

The fifth form of pressure Neethling listed was **lack of money**.



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Many feel they were protected while at school, and only on starting their tertiary studies do they realise their family is struggling financially, that they're not as well off as others.

Some feel the past is holding them back, others simply can't afford to go out with their peers or to buy data.



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The sixth form of pressure Neethling mentioned is that of **securing a job**.

This is a massive problem, as Bhorat mentioned the economy is just not creating opportunities.

“ According to Child Gauge 2017, the economy is not generating demand to expand employment. On average, South Africa lost more than 170,000 jobs per annum over the past nine years. At the same time, the youth segment grew by 200,000 per annum. You do the math. ”

There's also a rise of misaligned opportunities, and constant competition – there's always someone better than you, racing for the same job. There are high expectations on what you can achieve, and there's a prevailing sense of uncertainty, as having a degree doesn't guarantee a job, and once you start working, there's no such thing as job security.



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Neethling concluded with Accenture's 2017 finding from 'Creating the workforce of the future', that 35% of jobs are currently at risk of automation, as the default is always to do the job with fewer people.



Slide 172 of Youth Report (2018). UCT Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing & Instant Grass International.

But all is not lost. In spite of all that pervasive pressure, 64% of respondents reported they are generally content. There's still hope for the future generation.

Watch for more coverage of the UCT Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing's Youth Report 2018, and follow them on [Twitter](#) for the latest updates.

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh\_Andrews.

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