BURNOUT AMONG YOUNG ADULTS:
THE PERCEIVED ROLE OF DIFFERENT SOURCES OF PRESSURE

Master in Population Studies

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the number of cases of burnout in the Netherlands, particularly among young adults. In addition to the individual implications, the continuation of this trend can exacerbate labour shortages in essential sectors in the coming decade. To gain a better understanding of this phenomenon, this study aims to explore the sources of pressure that contribute to the development of burnout among young adults by examining internal, immediate environmental and societal pressures. To this end, the study investigates the question of how young adults who have experienced burnout perceive the sources of pressure that have played a role in the development of their burnout. This is achieved through the use of nine semi-structured in-depth interviews with young adults who have experienced a burnout, followed by a thematic analysis of the data. Internal pressure was perceived by the interviewees as a constant factor within their lives and as a fundamental cause of their burnout. Pressure from their immediate environment was perceived as an additional source of pressure that added to their internal pressure, resulting in an overwhelming amount of pressure. Societal pressure was perceived to exert an indirect influence, acting as an intensifier of other sources of pressure. Burnout can thus be regarded as the result of a complex interplay of different sources of pressure. Furthermore, the research has demonstrated the importance of self-awareness in the development of burnout. Future research is recommended to investigate methods for fostering self-awareness among young adults.

Keywords: burnout, sources of pressure, internal pressure, pressure from the immediate environment, societal pressure, young adults

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1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increase in the percentage of self-reported burnout-related symptoms among employees in the Netherlands, especially among younger ones (TNO, 2023). In the age category 18 to 34 years old, the percentage rose from 13% in 2015 to almost 24% in 2022. In comparison, the percentage among those aged 35 years and older changed from 14% to 18%. This trend has raised questions on whether specific factors play a role in the observed increase in the younger cohort. Upon request of the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, demographic research has been conducted among young adults regarding this issue. The findings indicated that women are more susceptible to burnout-related symptoms than men and that individuals with higher education levels are more likely to experience these symptoms than those with lower education levels. Furthermore, it has been observed that the prevalence of burnout-related symptoms has grown notably in the occupational sectors of healthcare and education.

At the individual level, burnout can lead to personal distress, physical exhaustion, sleeplessness and difficulties within the family unit (Maslach, 1981). In addition, burnout prevalence can result in a deterioration in the quality of care or service provided by affected staff and is a key factor in job turnover and low morale at work. TNO (2023) also found that the group of young adults experiencing the most severe burnout-related symptoms exhibited the highest incidence of absenteeism. If these trends set through, this can worsen the already growing shortage of essential workers in sectors including healthcare and education in the coming decade (NOS, 2022). Furthermore, the financial burden of absenteeism in the workplace due to burnout-related symptoms is estimated at 2.8 billion euros annually in the Netherlands (TNO, 2020). It is therefore of both individual and societal importance to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to burnout among young adults. A better comprehension of the different elements that play a role in burnout experiences may enhance our ability to intervene and work on prevention strategies.

To gain further insight into the underlying causes of burnout among young adults, TNO (2023) conducted a follow-up study in which they inquired about the primary stressors that young adults encounter in their lives. However, this research was conducted among the general population of young adults, rather than among those who have experienced burnout. Furthermore, stress is often the consequence of facing excessive or prolonged pressure. For further research, TNO (2023) recommended a deeper examination of these sources of pressure, in order to determine whether they mainly originate from within, from the immediate environment or from wider society. This research aims to address this research gap and contribute to the limited existing literature on the links between different sources of pressure and burnout.

By conducting in-depth interviews with young adults who have experienced burnout, this research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the various sources of pressure that play a role in the development of burnout among young adults. In this way, it hopes to contribute to more effective strategies to address and prevent burnout, focussing on the cohort of young adults. To be able to do this, the following question will be addressed: *"How do young adults who have experienced burnout perceive the sources of pressure that have played a role in the development of their burnout?"*. The different sources of pressure will be explored with the following sub-questions:

1. How do young adults perceive the role of internal pressure in the development of their burnout?
2. How do young adults perceive the role of pressure from their immediate environment in the development of their burnout?

3. How do young adults perceive the role of societal pressure in the development of their burnout?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Origins of the phenomenon burnout

The term 'burnout' was first described in a clinical context by American psychologist Freudenberger (1974) after experiencing a feeling state of burnout himself. In the course of his research, he observed the behaviour of volunteer workers at a free clinic in New York. In defining the term, he described a combination of gradual emotional depletion, loss of motivation and reduced commitment among the workers. Among the physical signs, he listed feelings of exhaustion and fatigue, frequent headaches and sleeplessness. He proposed that individuals who are dedicated and committed are particularly susceptible to burnout, given that they often work too much, too long and too intensely. He ascribed the motivation behind this devotion to the presence of different sources of pressure. Firstly, there is an internal pressure to work and to help, and secondly, there is an external pressure to give. In the context of high expectations at the workplace, this can act as a third source of pressure, as Freudenberger (1974) observed. Moreover, he suggested that a person's level of commitment may serve as an indicator of their need for social acceptance and approval. If a person spends too much energy on the act of giving to others, they are in danger of depleting themselves, resulting in burnout. He considered it essential to have personal sources of energy in one's life in order to prevent this energy depletion. His further work was mainly focused on fighting burnout rather than understanding its roots (Schaufeli, 2017).

Two years later, Maslach (1976) identified burnout as a prevalent phenomenon among healthcare and social service professionals. These groups are responsible for the care of people in need of assistance, in a manner that is both intense and intimate. The nature of their work entails concern for the psychological, social or physical problems of others, which can be emotionally charging. The continual emotional stress inherent to this work can be challenging to cope with and poses the risk of burnout. Consequently, Maslach (1976) emphasised the necessity of providing these groups with targeted training to equip them with the skills to effectively manage these emotions. Later, Maslach (1981) developed a scale for the measurement of burnout, termed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which remains the assessment instrument for burnout. In her Multidimensional Theory of Burnout, she posited that burnout manifests in three main ways. One aspect is emotional exhaustion, which occurs when emotional resources become depleted. A second aspect is the development of negative sentiments towards others or their work, leading to detachment. Thirdly, a reduction in personal efficacy occurs as individuals feel less capable of completing their tasks and lose confidence in their abilities. The initial version of the scale was designed for people working in the human service sector, following Maslach's article from 1976. However, in response to the growing interest in and prevalence of burnout in other occupational contexts, a more generic version was subsequently developed (Maslach, 1998). The phenomenon of burnout is thus no longer considered to be confined to the domain of human services work.

2.2 Conceptualisations of burnout and pressure

Nevertheless, in both academic literature and in practice, a variety of conceptualisations of burnout are employed. In the most recent versions of the International Classification of Diseases, the World Health Organization (2019) has included burnout in its handbook for medical practitioners. However, it is not classified as a medical condition, but rather as an occupational phenomenon. This means that burnout is not considered as an illness or health condition, but rather as a reason for individuals to contact health services. The term burnout is defined as a syndrome resulting from chronic stress in the workplace that is not successfully managed. Accordingly, the term should be employed

exclusively in reference to situations occurring in the workplace, and not applied to describe experiences in other contexts. In the Netherlands, general practitioners who provide the official diagnosis, as well as occupational and insurance physicians, employ a more expansive definition. They consider both occupational and private obligations to be potential stressors that may result in an inability to work. In accordance with their guidelines, a patient should experience prolonged distress and exhaustion for a period exceeding six months (TNO, 2020). Similarly, the Council for Public Health and Society in the Netherlands considers burnout to be a prolonged and severe manifestation of stress, whether originating from occupational or non-occupational factors (RVS, 2018). Currently, a universal definition of burnout has not been reached yet. As the focus of this research is on young adults with burnout experiences in the Netherlands, it will adhere to the Dutch conceptualisation of burnout, encompassing stressors beyond those occurring in a workplace setting.

The concepts of stress and pressure are sometimes used interchangeably in daily life to talk about mental tension, however they have distinct meanings. Pressure can be seen as a stressor, causing stress. In other words, stress is a reaction to pressure. According to the Stress and Coping Theory by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress is a complex construct, shaped by the interactions between an individual and the demands of a given situation. If the demands placed upon an individual exceed the resources available to them, in terms of time, energy or financial capital, it is probable that the individual will experience stress. Stress can be seen as a response to a challenge or a threat. Depending on how a person copes with stress, it can be stimulating or have a negative effect. To illustrate, an approaching deadline may lead to more motivation to complete a task or alternatively evoke a state of panic. Continuous pressure can be regarded as a significant source of stress (Harden, 1999). The experience of pressure arises when an individual perceives that the outcome of a situation depends on their personal performance (Weisinger & Pawliw-Fry, 2015). Pressure increases the perceived importance of performing well in a given situation (Baumeister, 1984). It is frequently constituted by expectations regarding one's personal performance. Persistent pressure can result in a cumulation of stress and, subsequently, the onset of burnout.

Pressure can originate from a multitude of sources within an individual's life. In 1976, Maslach proposed that many of the causes of burnout are not inherent personal characteristics, but rather the result of social and situational factors. In her Multidimensional Theory of Burnout, Maslach (1998) emphasised the interpersonal framework of burnout, situating the individual stress experience within a context of complex social relationships. According to Maslach, interpersonal relationships are a central component of the development of burnout. These relationships may either serve as a source of support or a source of pressure. On the other hand, Weinberg and Cooper (2015) outlined the impact of contemporary economic, political and environmental shifts on various domains of life, including the workplace, domestic life and financial matters. Consequently, there is an increased likelihood of having to cope with a multitude of sources of pressure that can simultaneously undermine one's sense of wellbeing. This research situates the individual experience of burnout within a social and societal context, examining internal, immediate environmental and societal sources of pressure.

2.3 Internal pressure

One of the ways in which pressure can build up is from within oneself. For instance, individuals who just started on the labour market or are newly employed may feel the need to make a positive impression and work hard. In these situations, people have been found to put themselves under pressure (Huxley et al., 2005). In 1974, Freudenberger posited that commitment can come from an intrinsic personal need to be accepted and liked. Such self-presentational concerns give rise to

internal pressure and originate from an individual's belief that others will value them according to their performance (Baumeister, 1982). The two main self-presentational motives are to please others and to construct an image of themselves in the minds of others that is close to their ideal self. Both of these motives stimulate the behaviour of helping others and conforming to social norms. The pressure generated by these self-presentational concerns is continuous, as there is a persistent desire to be perceived as reliable by others. As a pervasive pressure, self-presentational concerns may be contributing to the development of burnout.

Furthermore, internal pressure may take the form of an aspiration to achieve personal expectations regarding one's life. This may manifest as a desire to optimise the utilisation of one's time. Contemporary young adults have a wide range of options at their disposal during their leisure time and are eager to seize the opportunities that arise. In addition to maintaining a busy work schedule, many individuals strive to engage in a rich and active social life. They often impose upon themselves the pressure to not miss out on any social activities. Additionally, they often participate in a multitude of hobbies and sports. In the absence of sufficient rest from all these activities, this can result in a depletion of energy resources, contributing to the development of burnout (Zijlstra & De Vries, 2000). In addition, individuals may impose pressure on themselves to achieve perfectionist standards. Perfectionism has been described as a multidimensional construct, encompassing both personal and social components (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Self-oriented perfectionism is characterised by the setting of exacting standards for oneself, driven by an intrinsic desire to achieve perfection. A review of the literature reveals a complex relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and burnout, with findings from different studies indicating a mix of positive, negative and non-significant associations (Childs & Stoeber, 2012; Holden & Jeanfreau, 2023). The internal pressure to achieve one's fullest potential and optimize one's life may play a role in the development of burnout.

Moreover, a lack of awareness of one's limitations and thereby exceeding them makes one more vulnerable to burnout (Maslach, 1982). Not knowing when it's time to stop, when to say no or when to change things can increase the chances of experiencing an emotional overload. This is particularly the case for individuals who frequently provide care to others. Often, these individuals put pressure on themselves to resolve issues for others. A strong sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of others can manifest as a substantial emotion burden, leading to feelings of emotional exhaustion and the development of burnout (Maslach, 1982). Without the recognition of one's actual limitations, they tend to exert themselves to the fullest extent possible. When the results of their actions do not live up to their expectations, feelings of failure will arise, as they blame themselves. Individuals with less self-awareness were found to be more prone to overwork, exhibit higher stress levels and experience burnout (Kearney et al., 2009). According to Ouliaris (2019), as our lives become increasingly demanding, it becomes increasingly essential to prioritise self-awareness, especially as it is a vital tool in combating burnout.

2.4 Pressure from the immediate environment

In addition to internal pressure, pressure from one's immediate environment, such as from close ones, can also be a source of stress. The perceived need to meet specific standards and fulfil high expectations set by close ones has been termed socially prescribed perfectionism (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). It concerns an individual's perception that pressure is put on them to be perfect. By attempting to meet these standards, they deplete their resources. In contrast with self-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism has been consistently demonstrated in numerous studies to have a positive association with burnout (Childs & Stoeber, 2012; Holden & Jeanfreau, 2023). A principal source of socially prescribed perfectionism can be attributed to parental expectations and criticism

(Smith et al., 2017; Damian et al., 2013). Moreover, it can come from other family members, friends, and romantic partners (Smith et al., 2019). For example, family situations which demand a considerable investment of energy can cause emotional exhaustion (Demerouti, 2004). Mothers may experience pressure from their environment to be a perfect mother, which can contribute to stress and the development of parental burnout (Meeussen & Van Laar, 2018; Roskam et al., 2017). Conversely, close ones can also serve as a source of support, offering assistance in coping with or altering challenging demands that contribute to stress (Thoits, 1986). In this way, social support can function to mitigate the perceived pressure. Those in one's immediate social circle can thus either exert pressure on an individual or provide social support.

Moreover, individuals may also experience pressure from their immediate work environment. In the workplace, a combination of mounting responsibilities and demands with inadequate time to complete the required tasks can result in a pressure that depletes one's energy resources, enthusiasm and idealism (Sharma & Cooper, 2017). In addition, this pressure can affect the quality of interpersonal relationships within the workplace. On the one hand, the pressure to complete tasks in time may result in a reduction in the amount of time available for interaction with colleagues. On the other hand, time pressure can result in interpersonal conflicts in the workplace, as people are rushed and stressed. As a consequence, individuals may begin to disengage from their workplace, which represents a key symptom of burnout. This may initially present as a psychological withdrawal from social activities. At a later stage, this withdrawal from the workplace may manifest as burnout and related absenteeism. Staff absence, whether due to sick leave or vacant posts, can in turn result in increased pressure for the remaining employees, as they are expected to take on additional work. Furthermore, in a study conducted among health and social workers, 75% of the participants reported feeling pressured to work extra hours (Huxley et al., 2005). Additionally, this study identified an association between the number of additional hours worked and poor mental health. Time pressure may thus result in detachment from the workplace and an overwhelming experience of stress, which could potentially lead to burnout.

There are more sources of pressure at work that can contribute to burnout. As a consequence of technological advancements, employees can be contacted with relative ease via phone or email and are often expected to be available at all times. The distinction between work and leisure time is becoming increasingly blurred, with employees more likely to engage in work-related activities during their free time. Barber and Santuzzi (2015) have demonstrated the adverse effects of this so-called workplace telepressure, as it is a predictor of burnout. The expected constant availability of employees hampers their ability to recover from work-related stress and unwind after work. Furthermore, there is competitive pressure in times of job insecurity. In order to safeguard their position, individuals can feel pressured to stay at work for as many hours as possible and to give their utmost. For fear of losing one's job if one calls in sick, this pressure can lead employees who feel unwell still decide to come to work, thereby further depleting themselves (Weinberg & Cooper, 2015). Alternatively, when employees perceive that their employer values and supports them, they experience less psychological strain and pressure. Indeed, they often report greater confidence in their ability to navigate challenging work situations (Huxley et al., 2005). In contrast, when employers prioritise quantitative outcomes over qualitative aspects of work and provide feedback that is oriented towards shortcomings rather than constructive guidance, this can contribute to burnout (Maslach, 1982). In sum, telepressure, competitive pressure and the supervisory relationship can all play a role in the development of burnout.

2.5 Societal pressure

A considerable amount of stress exposure is associated with socio-cultural demands within society (Aldwin, 2012). As Schaufeli (2017) posits, the emergence of burnout can be attributed to socio-economic and socio-cultural developments, including globalisation and individualisation, which have fostered an emphasis on high productivity and competition. In the context of the workplace, this has resulted in a shift in focus towards the individual performance of employees, rather than the central management of teams (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005). Furthermore, contemporary society is typified by an abundance of positivity, whereby the prevailing sentiment is that anything is possible and nothing is impossible (Han, 2015). Given the abundance of opportunities available to young adults in contemporary society, they are expected to utilise these opportunities and strive to become the best version of themselves. In the context of a society where success is widely assumed to be attainable, setbacks are often viewed as failures and ascribed to poor decision-making and actions on the part of individuals. The pressure to make the right decisions and perform well can be considered a consequence of the societal emphasis on performance (Wienen, 2021). Because an individual can feel the need to perform well on a daily basis, this pressure can act as a chronic stressor.

The societal emphasis on positivity is also evidenced by the extent to which society attaches considerable value to the state of being happy, or in scientific terms, to high subjective well-being. Happiness is often associated with personal thriving across a range of life domains, including work, social life and health. The pervasive message in contemporary society that happiness should be pursued is evident in various forms of media, including campaigns, self-help literature, social media influencers and commercial advertisements. The constant reiteration of this message results in the internalisation of this emotional standard. Consequently, any feelings of negativity are quickly regarded as problematic. The societal pressure to be happy and the perceived failure to reach this expectation often lead to the intensification of negative emotions and stress (Dejonckheere, 2022). As negative emotions are stigmatised, there is an increased likelihood of experiencing loneliness (Mauss et al., 2012). In the context of burnout, individuals who perceive their burnout experience as unique and not shared by others are more likely to attribute their burnout to personal factors (Maslach, 1982). Moreover, these individuals present themselves as if they are coping effectively to others. This phenomenon contributes to the persistence of stigmatisation of burnout and negative emotions. By intensifying negative emotions and stress, societal pressure to be happy can contribute to the development of burnout.

Furthermore, young adults may experience negative mental health effects from social media. Research by Han et al. (2020) has shown a significant positive correlation between social media use and burnout. While social media may provide users with valuable information and entertainment, it also results in a depletion of time and energy. In addition, social media has expanded the scope for social comparison. Consequently, it may prompt individuals to more frequent and intense self-evaluations regarding a number of characteristics, including their physical appearance, health, family life, financial status and occupational role. As people on social media tend to present only positive experiences, observers may perceive that others' lives are better (Chou & Edge, 2012). This results in negative feelings about one's own life (De Vries & Kühne, 2015). Furthermore, social media may hinder young adults from listening to their own feelings and coping effectively. The act of spending time on social media can be a means of suppressing or avoiding the necessity to engage with negative emotions (Rasmussen et al., 2020). Moreover, push notifications and messages further distract individuals from their emotions and from their work, leading to concentration and sleep problems, exhaustion and burnout (Oksa et al., 2021). Social media can thus play a role in the development of burnout in a multitude of ways.

2.6 Young adults and pressure

In considering the ways in which individuals perceive a stressor such as pressure, age is an important factor. Older adults are less likely to appraise events as problematic (Boeninger et al., 2009). When they do experience it as a problem, they exhibit lower stress ratings. In fact, age was identified as the most consistent predictor of the number of stress appraisals of all personal characteristics investigated by Boeninger et al. (2009). According to them, this is due to a developmental process whereby experience throughout the lifespan provides different perspectives on the degree of seriousness of a problem. Furthermore, it was found that older individuals are less likely to perceive responsibility for both the solution and occurrence of a problem (Aldwin, 1991). This suggests that they are likely to experience less pressure. According to Aldwin (2012), this is likely associated with a reduction in the number of social roles in later life, as older adults often no longer have active parenting roles and, when retired, also no longer have working roles. Contrastingly, as young adults transition into adulthood, they assume new roles and responsibilities in life which they have to adjust to, such as entering the labour market and starting a family (Aldwin, 2012). Consequently, young adults are more susceptible to pressure from a greater number of sources.

2.7 Conceptual model

A conceptual model was developed based on the literature discussed, as displayed in Figure 1. The rainbow style of the conceptual model is derived from the Social Determinants of Health Model by Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991). Their model focuses on the non-medical factors that shape health outcomes. According to their model, the health of an individual is influenced by a multitude of conditions operating at various levels, including the work environment, social networks and the societal environment. Individual factors, such as behaviour and personality, are situated within this societal and social context. The conceptual model below displays the sources of pressure in a similar manner, with internal pressure situated closest to the young adult, followed by pressure from the immediate environment and finally, pressure from wider society.
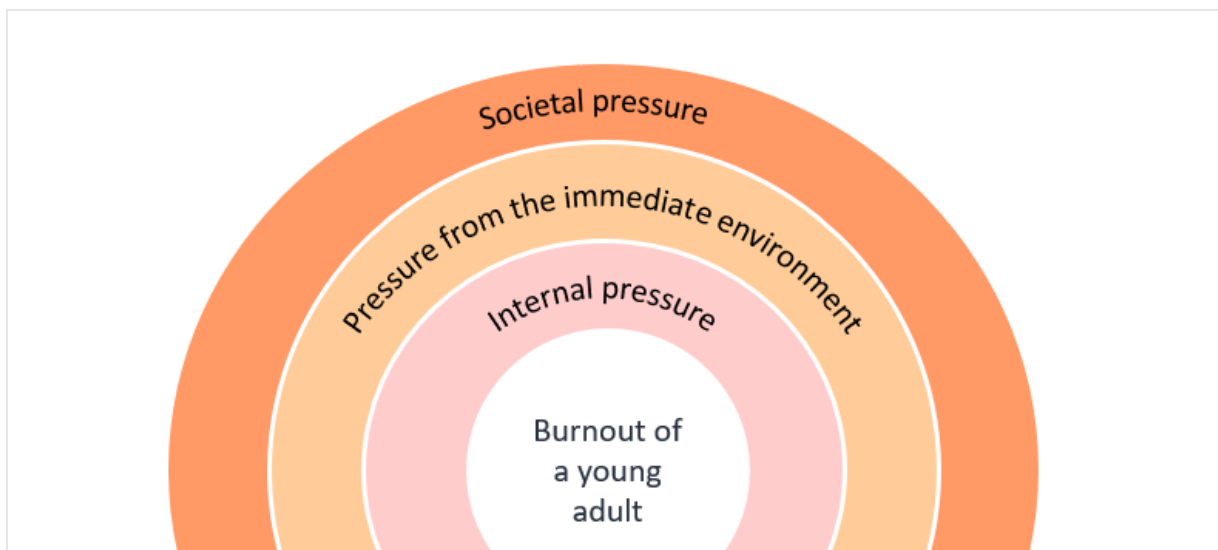
Figure 1: Conceptual model of the different sources of pressure experienced by young people with a burnout, inspired by the Social Determinants of Health Model by Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991).

In light of the literature reviewed, it can be expected that a multitude of sources of pressure will be relevant to the burnout experiences of young adults. Given that internal pressure originates from within the individual, it is expected that this source of pressure will play a continuous role in the lives

of the young adults in question. Moreover, pressure from the immediate environment is expected to play an important role as it can be a recurrent stressor for young adults in their various roles and responsibilities. Finally, societal pressure is expected to play an overarching role, adding to the other sources of pressure as an extra layer of pressure.

3. Methodology

3.1 Recruitment process

This study focused on young adults who had experienced burnout in the recent past. There are different definitions of the age group referred to as young adults. This study followed the one used by TNO (2023), as well as by the Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands (2017) and Statistics Netherlands (2023). This means that the study population consisted of young adults aged between 18 and 35 years. Whereas previous research on burnout among young adults by TNO (2023) has asked young adults in general about the pressures they experience, this study focused specifically on young adults who have experienced burnout. A further criterion was that the participants had experienced burnout in the recent past, in order to minimise recall bias and error. As Althubaiti (2016) notes, this can result in an under- or overestimation of the true effects of a factor. However, the objective of this research was not to quantify the effects of the different pressures, but rather to examine perceptions on their roles qualitatively. Nevertheless, in qualitative research, reflections on past experiences may differ from the perceptions of the experience at the time of occurrence. The potential influence of recall bias on the findings is addressed in the discussion section of the thesis. To remain within the context of the Dutch socio-cultural environment and the associated pressures, it was necessary for the participants to reside in the Netherlands. Furthermore, conducting the interviews in one language reduced the potential for validity issues such as translation mistakes and misinterpretations. Therefore, the study population comprised Dutch young adults who had experienced burnout in the recent past.

Potential participants were contacted through the use of snowball sampling, whereby existing contacts were used to reach further individuals and via the distribution of a recruitment flyer (see Appendix A). The flyer outlined the aim of the research, the criteria for participation and provided contact details for further information. The flyer was distributed on the professional networking platform LinkedIn. Furthermore, physical copies were posted at a variety of locations throughout the city of Groningen. These included supermarkets, community centres, sports centres, the teachers' room of a school and a healthcare institution. This was carried out with the objective of reaching a diverse population in terms of sociodemographic characteristics. At a later stage, following a limited number of responses, burnout coaches were contacted and asked if they could share the flyer amongst their respective networks, which several did. In addition, they recommended approaching the CSR Expertise Centre on burnout coaching, which was also willing to share the flyer on LinkedIn. Eventually, a number of individuals expressed their willingness to participate in this research. However, some were not selected for participation in the study as they were not available within the timeframe of this research, or only available for an online interview. Given the sensitivity and complexity of the research topic, this approach was not preferred. Instead, it was deemed that an in-person interview would allow for a more personal and in-depth exploration. Ultimately, nine young adults with a burnout experience participated in the research.

The nine participants included in the study constituted a diverse group with regard to gender, age, educational background and main economic activity at the time of the onset of burnout, which contributed to the quality of the data. Six female and three male participants were interviewed, with an age range between 20 and 30 years. The times since the onset of their burnout ranged from one to a maximum of six years. Of the nine participants, four were a student at the time of the burnout. The remaining participants were employed as health care workers, in a team leadership role, and as a member of a helpdesk team. Educational backgrounds included MBO, HBO and university, with three

of the participants engaged in further studies at the time of the interviews. The socio-demographic characteristics of the pseudonymised participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the research participants

Interviewee	Gender	Age at the time of interview	Time since onset burnout	Main economic activity at the time of burnout	Educational background
Anna	Female	20-23	1-3 years	Student	University
Belle	Female	20-23	1-3 years	Student	HBO/ University
Carlo	Male	28-30	1-3 years	Team leader	University
Diede	Female	28-30	4-6 years	Healthcare worker	University
Ewout	Male	24-27	4-6 years	Healthcare worker	MBO/ HBO
Fieke	Female	28-30	4-6 years	Student	HBO
Guus	Male	24-27	1-3 years, 7-9 years	Service desk employee	MBO
Heleen	Female	28-30	4-6 years	Healthcare worker	MBO/ HBO
Ines	Female	20-23	4-6 years	Student	University

3.2 Semi-structured interviews

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the role of different sources of pressure as perceived by young adults with a burnout experience, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The semi-structured interview format enabled the interviewer to draw upon the findings of previous academic research, while simultaneously allowing for engagement with the unique experiences of the interviewees. Furthermore, it facilitated the identification of recurring patterns pertaining to specific themes. Given that the research was conducted in the context of the Netherlands, the interview guide was prepared in Dutch. The semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix B) commenced with questions about the characteristics of the participants, inviting the interviewees to introduce themselves. Subsequently, the interviewees were asked to provide a description of their burnout experience. Follow-up questions were asked about the context of the experience, including the time frame in which it occurred. The remaining sections of the guide were based on the three sources of pressure identified in the literature review. Open-ended and probing questions were posed about the individual's perception of the role of internal pressure, pressure from the immediate environment and societal pressure in their burnout. The interview guide concluded with an invitation to the interviewee to raise any additional topics they felt were important but not discussed thus far. Following the initial interview, no alterations were made to the interview guide, as it was deemed to be sufficiently comprehensive. After the ninth interview, the data reached a point of saturation, as no new topics emerged during the last set of interviews.

Acknowledging the sensitivity of the topic, the interviewees were free to choose a location where they felt comfortable talking about their experiences. On the one hand, individuals may feel most safe talking about their experiences in their own home (Hämäläinen & Rautio, 2013). Therefore, the option of conducting the interview in the interviewee's home was offered. On the other hand,

individuals may prefer a neutral setting to keep the experience of recalling emotionally difficult events out of their home. A meeting room at the University of Groningen was proposed as a private, quiet option. Subsequently, five of the interviews were conducted in a meeting room at the university and two in the interviewees' homes. As the interviewer was already familiar with the environment while some interviewees were not, the university was not always a neutral setting. To facilitate their sense of ease and adaptation to an unfamiliar setting, the interviewees were first offered a cup of coffee or tea and an informal conversation. To signal the formal start of the interview, they were asked if they agreed with starting the recording. Two interviews were conducted in an office at work locations of the interviewees, as this was the most convenient option for them. While they both expressed that they felt comfortable conducting the interview in this setting, they may have been less inclined to open up about certain topics, such as work pressure. However, the quality of the data appeared to be comparable, as the interviewees engaged in extensive discourse on all topics. The interviews were audio-recorded and ranged in length between 46 and 77 minutes, largely due to variations in the number and nature of personal anecdotes shared.

3.3 Data analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim in Microsoft Word. After each interview, notes were taken regarding the main themes during the interview. This process facilitated an initial familiarity with the data. Afterwards, the digital transcripts were coded and analysed in the software programme Atlas.ti. Through a thematic analysis, deductive codes were derived from the findings of the literature review. Furthermore, inductive codes were established based on recurring topics that emerged from the interviews. Following the initial coding, the codes were revised and refined, in some cases combined or renamed to better reflect their thematic fit. These codes were then grouped according to their overarching themes of internal pressure, pressure from the immediate environment and societal pressure. Subsequently, the codes were organised into networks. For each overarching theme of the sources of pressure, a coding tree was formed (see Appendix C). Within each tree, the darker colours refer to inductive codes, including performance anxiety, sense of responsibility, pressure from teachers, micro-management and financial pressure.

3.4 Ethical considerations and positionality

As this research entails the use of personal data, it is essential to take ethical considerations into account. This was done in accordance with a research data management plan, which is provided in Appendix D. The study population can be regarded as a vulnerable group, given that they have experienced burnout, which can be considered a (mental) health problem. It was therefore decided that the study would exclusively be conducted among young adults who had already recovered from burnout, so that they may be in a less vulnerable position. In addition, the participants were invited to contact me if they were interested. The decision to not approach potential participants directly was made to reduce the probability that they would feel pressured to engage in the study. Prior to the interviews, the potential participants were asked to read an information sheet which detailed the purpose of the research, the processing of their data and the measures employed to safeguard their data (see Appendix E). If the participants remained interested in participating after the reading of this information, they were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix F), which set out the terms of their participation and allowed them to withdraw at any time until the submission of the thesis.

The interviews were recorded via the Voice Memos application on a phone, which was protected with a personal code, thus ensuring that only the interviewer had access to the files. After the interviews,

the recordings were downloaded from the phone and stored on a password-protected laptop, in an encrypted folder. The interview recordings were then deleted from the phone. During the transcription process, the participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the data. In addition, any additional identifying information, such as job titles and locations, was removed. The audio files and transcriptions were stored separately in encrypted folders, to be deleted after the grading of the thesis.

With regards to positionality, there are a couple of important aspects to discuss. First of all, I have not experienced a burnout myself. In this view, the participants were regarded as the experts. During the recruitment process, it would have been improper for me to assess whether a person's symptoms could be classified as burnout. Therefore, instead of searching for young adults with burnout-symptoms, I concentrated my search on those with a formal diagnosis. Upon initial contact, I inquired about the potential participants' experiences with burnout and whether they had received a diagnosis. Furthermore, I ensured that my positionality was addressed at the start of the interviews, stating that although I did not have personal experience of burnout, I wanted to learn about their experiences. I listened to their stories with careful attention and an open mind, encouraging them to express themselves as they wished. In addition, I provided an explanation of my motivation for pursuing this research topic, so they knew my interest in their experiences was genuine. I did my best to show them my understanding and empathy in my responses to their contributions. Lastly, I expressed my gratitude for their time and effort, both verbally and through a small token of my appreciation.

During the writing process of the thesis, AI was used to correct grammatical and spelling mistakes and to provide suggestions for better sentence structure for the original text. The purpose of this was to improve the readability of the thesis. A free version of Deepl Write was used for these language correction suggestions.

4. Results

4.1 Internal pressures

4.1.1 Self-prescribed perfectionism

A common experience among most of the interviewees was that their burnout occurred during or after a very active period in their lives. For some, this active lifestyle was driven by an internal desire to get the most out of life. They engaged in various activities because they enjoyed them and wanted to excel, seeing no reason to quit at the time. These activities included trying out different sports, traveling, spending time with friends, studying, having a side or full-time job. However, when burnout symptoms became visible, there was a reason to reconsider and slow down:

> *All those things together kind of got me to the point where I thought, okay, I like what I'm doing, but it's so much together that I can't enjoy it anymore. And yeah, that's when I did hit the brakes. (Anna, student)*

This relates to a finding by Zijlstra & De Vries (2000), who suggested that an overactive life style without sufficient rest can result in energy depletion and burnout. Setting high personal expectations, such as being active or excelling in everything, was a familiar practice for all interviewees. This was often the case for multiple aspects in life. For example, Anna described feeling a pressure from within to be the best student possible. In addition, she put pressure on herself to be someone others could rely on and went to sports training mainly to push herself to a higher ranking. A similar narrative came from Belle (student), who felt a need to excel in sports and in her internship, where she aspired to become a manager. She really wanted to feel like she accomplished something big. The same can be said for Carlo (team leader), who had always had the feeling that he wanted to achieve great things and contribute to something important, which put pressure on him and his activities. The other interviewees too expressed that they have always strived for the best version of themselves and that this has played a role in the development of their burnout. These findings diverge from those of the existing literature, which shows a mix positive, negative and non-significant associations between self-prescribed perfectionism and burnout (Childs & Stoeber, 2012).

For some interviewees, their perfectionist standards were accompanied by performance anxiety, as they believed they were not capable of achieving their aspirations. Sometimes, this led them to work even harder, telling themselves that if others could do it, they must be able to do it too. Still, when they would see the good results of their hard work, the anxiety persisted. Performance anxiety led them to get stranded in multiple situations in life in the run-up of their burnout, as they were constrained by the fear of not being able to reach their goals and the associated pressure:

> *Because of my perfectionism I am really inclined to want the best out of the best, and then I get stuck on that, because then I can't do it. I find it very difficult to appraise my own qualities and simply use it in a healthy way, so to speak. (Heleen, healthcare worker)*

4.1.2 Strong sense of responsibility

Internal pressure was furthermore experienced as having a strong sense of responsibility. A number of interviewees expressed feeling very responsible for patients, colleagues and work tasks. They often took this pressure home with them, making it difficult for them to disengage from work at home. Furthermore, multiple interviewees indicated that they felt responsible for the wellbeing of their relatives or partner. For example, in both his personal and professional lives, Ewout felt extremely

responsible for everyone around him. Ultimately, this feeling of having to carry the burden of the world on his shoulders led to an overwhelming sense of pressure:

> *Because you are also responsible for all patients in the department and for their wellbeing. But you can't make people better, so to speak. If you are not there, the department continues to operate. And that is something I really had to learn, not to be so strict on myself, so yes, I put a lot of pressure on myself in that regard. (Ewout, healthcare worker)*

This sentiment was shared by Heleen who felt responsible as a healthcare worker because of recurring labour shortages at work. This was particularly the case on occasions when she was finally permitted a day of rest and she was called in to cover for a colleague. In declining, her sense of responsibility for clients and colleagues caused her to worry for the remainder of the day, despite her need for rest. Moreover, she was frequently prompted to reflect on whether she could have acted differently in specific situations. Similarly, as a team leader Carlo had a lot of close contact with colleagues. Feeling responsible for them and for problems at work, he often carried these worries with him outside of work, rethinking his actions. The ongoing pressure of doing the right thing was hard to handle and played a role in the development of their burnout. This link between a strong sense of responsibility and burnout is also seen in the literature, as it can lead to emotional exhaustion (Maslach, 1982).

4.1.3 Self-presentational concerns

Saying no to others is often difficult for people who like to please others. All of the interviewees talked about how important it was for them to go above and beyond to help others and act in their best interests. As a result, they undertook activities only for the sake of others. Diede, for example, admitted that she used to be very sensitive to the needs of others and would often go along with their wishes. Her pleasing behaviour made it difficult for her to stand up for herself. In fact, in both her work as a healthcare worker and in her personal life, she was always busy looking after others, rather than listening to herself. At first, this made her feel good and important, but eventually it left her feeling completely exhausted. The energy depletion that goes along with consistently prioritising the needs and desires of others over one's own, can be a big factor in burnout, as Anna also experienced:

> *For me it was mainly an emotional burnout and I think that was mainly because I was doing things that meant little to me personally and I was putting the things that meant a lot to me aside to do these other things. And if you don't do the things that give you energy or that are close to you, then you run empty. (Anna, student)*

The diagnosis of burnout made it easier for the interviewees to say no to others. The advice from a healthcare professional to prioritise their own wellbeing to facilitate recovery provided a compelling argument for them to focus more on their own needs.

In addition to a desire to please others, all interviewees also expressed a concern with regard to how they appeared to others. Trying to control the image others had of them made them feel more comfortable. It was explained as a desire to be accepted and liked by others, which aligns with the existing literature on self-presentational concerns (Freudenberger, 1974). They would have a clear image in their minds of what a good friend, partner, daughter or employee would look like and would do everything to ensure that they lived up to that image. This could take the form of giving the impression that all was well, like wearing a mask. For example, as a new service desk employee, Guus wanted to show his ability to work independently and therefore refrain from asking for any help from

his co-workers. Similarly, as not to burden or worry her parents, Fieke presented only the positive aspects of her life to them, creating the impression that everything in her life was going well:

> *I just would not mention things that were not going well. […] I would tell them I passed my first exam. But I wouldn't mention that I had failed four exams before that. I would only talk about the things that were going well to live up to the image I had created of myself.' (Fieke, as student)*

It was her way of being in control of her parents' image of her. Another example is that Anna, a student, considered it important to present herself as a trustworthy person, especially in terms of professionalism she had high standards for herself. If she found herself in a situation where she had promised to do something but discovered that she lacked the required time for it, she would do everything she could to do it anyway, leaving something else undone that was not visible to others. As a continuous pressure to present themselves in a certain way, this contributed to the development of their burnout.

4.1.4 Self-awareness

Internal pressure was perceived by some interviewees as a stable factor in their lives that had been present for as long as they could remember. As such, they were sometimes used to its consequences and knew how to deal with it at a basic level. At the same time, they saw it as a risk factor for their burnout. With other external pressures, it became more difficult to cope with their internal pressure. Carlo emphasised the importance of self-awareness in the development of burnout:

> *I also think that if you are susceptible to burnout in a certain way, because you just have a certain personality, it can always happen again and you just have to be alert to it and react to the signals in time. (Carlo, team leader)*

Ewout's (healthcare worker) perspective was in line with this, stating that one of the main difficulties in the development of his burnout was that he was not able to sense his own limits and make them known, because he did not know himself well enough. A similar view was expressed by Ines (student), who was convinced that anyone could develop burnout, as anyone can become overloaded at any point in their life. However, when comparing herself to others, she would see a difference in the way some people cope with stress, namely that they seem to take everything as it comes. She believed that the risk of burnout could be considerably reduced by setting boundaries, knowing when to say no and being able to manage stress. This was something that also played a role for Diede (healthcare worker). Her internal pressure meant that she never took a break and checked in with herself. She lost touch with what was going on inside her. As a result, she was unaware of the physical symptoms that could serve as warning signs for her burnout. For all interviewees, their recovery period was focused on learning about their limits and how to listen to them, sometimes with the help of a practice nurse or psychologist. These findings are in accordance with the literature that states self-awareness can play an important role in preventing burnout (Maslach, 1982; Kearney et al., 2009; Ouliaris, 2019).

4.2 Pressure from the immediate environment

4.2.1 Parents

In contrast to self-prescribed perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism describes the perceived need to meet the high standards set by close ones (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). This is related to how much pressure one experiences from their immediate environment. When asked how much pressure they

experienced from their parents, the answers varied. For some, their parents were always very relaxed about their achievements and supportive of their choices, as long as they were doing something they enjoyed. As such, they did not perceive parental pressure as playing a role in the development of their burnout. Others experienced more pressure from their parents to meet their expectations. For example, they felt pressured to go to university, because their parents expected them to. There was also a strong emphasis was placed on success and career advancement. For Ines, living with a mother who expected a lot of her added to her own internal pressures as a student. Her mother always told her to focus on getting her diploma, no matter what else was going on in her life or how she was feeling. This made Ines feel that her whole world depended on her performing well and that everything would fall apart if she did not, leading to an overwhelming pressure. Similarly, for Diede, the pressure from her achievement-oriented family led her to believe that her worth was based on her accomplishments. In the development of her burnout, there was no attention for her emotional needs:

> When I raised the alarm with my family that things just weren't going well […] in the run-up to my burnout, I kept getting told: 'You shouldn't dwell so much on what you are feeling, you should just move on, you should just not worry about it so much', and because I didn't feel understood I think it only got worse, because then I thought to myself, okay, apparently it's just me. (Diede, healthcare worker)

During the interview, she reflected on this and emphasised the important role of this pressure in her burnout, noting that her family's understanding could have provided her with the support she needed during the development of her burnout. These findings are in line with existing research indicating that parental expectations and criticism can exert a lot of pressure on their children, but which also indicates that parents can act as a source of support for their children (Smith et al., 2017; Damian et al., Thoits, 1986).

4.2.2 Friends

When discussing the role of pressure from friends, some interviewees indicated that this pressure mainly came from being expected to be present at social activities. They felt a social obligation to be present, as they were aware that their friends would be disappointed if they did not show up. To illustrate, Diede (healthcare worker) reported feeling pressure from some friends to go out on a frequent basis, even after having indicated her lack of energy. As her friends were able to have a busy work and social life, she felt pressured to keep up with them. Likewise, Belle (student) would sometimes have friends over at her place while she was still working, who waiting for her to come home and join them. At home, she was always expected to spend time with her roommates, rather than having time to herself. During the interviews, it was also discussed that as you age, it becomes increasingly challenging to maintain connections with friends due to the limited time available outside of work. For several interviewees, this meant finding out who their real friends were, the ones who didn't mind if they didn't see them for a while. Most interviewees did not feel any social comparison pressure to be like their friends. However, Carlo (team leader) often compared his job with a friend's job, which he considered more important. As such, he felt an indirect pressure to also do something more important. Overall, the interviewees would rather make their own choices for their own lives rather than follow their friends.

4.2.3 Partner

Having a demanding partner was for some interviewees critical in the development of their burnout. During her relationship, Anna (student) had to provide a lot of emotional support to her partner. This

put a lot of pressure on her as she had to be available for him day and night. His criticism became a constant element in her life:

> *He was very critical and demanding, and I think that's why I also got a critical voice in my head that, as it were, echoes that. (Anna, student)*

Belle (student) also experienced a lot of stress and pressure in her relationship, which took a lot of energy. She too was always expected to be available and to spend all her time with her partner. On top of her academic and athletic commitments, this was unattainable for her. Because she always had to think about what he wanted of her, she lost sight of her own feelings. This had a lasting effect on her, including during the development of her burnout. The other interviewees did not report experiencing pressure from their partners.

4.2.4 Managers and colleagues

Pressure from the immediate environment was also experienced from coworkers, especially from managers. Several interviewees indicated that they felt under pressure from their managers to perform well and work hard. As the interviewees already had an intrinsic motivation to work hard, the pressure from their managers was perceived to add to their internal pressure. Only receiving negative feedback was identified as an important contributing factor in the development of their burnout. From Guus' perspective, both his first and second burnout were, to a great extent, attributable to managers with high expectations. In his role as a service desk employee, Guus had to account for and justify his actions every six minutes, even for visiting the restroom. This micromanagement did not go well with his internal pressure of wanting to perform well as a new employee:

> *They were very micromanaging. Always like, 'You did this wrong, you did that wrong'. And never once a compliment or just saying, if you do it this or that way next time. [...] And I had exactly the same experience with my first burnout. Just everything you did was wrong. You just have to see for yourself what you are doing right, but especially when you are young and inexperienced, it is very difficult. (Guus, service desk employee)*

The pressure of micromanagement was also a deciding factor for Belle (student) during her internship. Every day, she received comments on her posture, what she had said, what she had done wrong, regardless of her best efforts. Eventually, she could not take it any more, leading to the development of her burnout. In the literature, an overload of negative feedback from managers was also identified as a contributing factor to burnout (Maslach, 1982).

Other interviewees mainly experienced a lack of understanding and support from their managers. In the development of their burnout, they tried reaching out to their managers. However, instead of empathy, they were met with irritated managers who expected them to resume to work:

> *I called my manager and said, 'I can't do it anymore, I can't handle it', and then he made a deep sigh and said, 'Okay, but what should I do with that'? [...] That was very awful, because you have to call and say that you can't take it anymore. That's already a terrible thing to do. I felt so small. Especially being a perfectionist. (Heleen, healthcare worker)*

> *My two managers would say, 'Clients are getting angry, you have to work again'. So they shifted the problem, so to speak. No attention at all for your well-being. [A year before my burnout] I raised the alarm and said, 'It's really not going well, this isn't okay, this isn't just the flu'. And I received a call every day saying, 'Are you feeling better?' Every evening. That is not very healthy of course. (Diede, healthcare worker)*

As a result, they did not perceive their situation and feelings to be taken seriously and felt pressured to recover quickly, which was not beneficial to their recovery process and contributed to their burnout. In fact, Ewout (healthcare worker) stated that his burnout lasted longer because of this pressure, which continued throughout his burnout. According to Heleen (healthcare worker), people who care for others as their job often experience intense situations. For her, it is therefore necessary to have a manager who can see when you are not feeling well and who will reach out to you. This idea is also found in the literature, as employees who feel supported by their employer experience less pressure and psychological strain (Weinberg & Cooper, 2015).

In the workplace, pressure from colleagues was experienced to a lesser extent than from managers, and in some cases, not at all. Guus (service desk employee) and Diede (healthcare worker) both perceived high expectations because of how hard their colleagues worked and felt pressured to match this work ethic. However, this pressure was more indirect than direct. In contrast, Carlo's colleagues were highly critical towards him in his role as a team leader. He regarded this as beneficial, as it motivated him to develop professionally. Nevertheless, it also induced a sense of pressure. The remaining interviewees did not report experiencing pressure from colleagues.

4.2.5 Teachers

Most of the interviewees who developed burnout during their academic careers reported experiencing pressure from their teachers. Teachers frequently expressed high expectations, accompanied by a sentiment of leaving students to cope with their own struggles. The students perceived that the focus was placed on the completion of their study programme, with minimal consideration given to the students' wellbeing. Being treated in a manner that placed the responsibility for their study progress solely on their shoulders was perceived as a source of pressure. As with the descriptions of unsupportive managers outlined above, the students encountered little assistance when they sought help in dealing with difficulties. To illustrate, when Anna asked for extra help in a course, the teacher informed her that he had already provided the maximum support by delivering lectures and that the remainder of the responsibility rested with her. For Fieke, a lack of assistance from her teachers made her completely lose faith in them and in the academic system. The pressure of having to find out everything on her own took a lot of energy and contributed to the development of her burnout. Furthermore, the pressure Ines experienced came from her mentor, who persistently emphasised the importance of performing well or risk failing the year. This caused her to have performance anxiety, even though she was performing very well. These findings indicate that teachers can be influential in the pressure young adults experience.

4.2.6 Time pressure

In addition to pressure from other people in their immediate environment, the interviewees also experienced pressure from the demands of their work or study programme itself. During the interviews, the issue of time pressure was mentioned frequently. For some interviewees, the need to work overtime and to take only brief lunch breaks was an inherent aspect of their jobs in order to meet deadlines. Those employed in the healthcare sector experienced an intensification of time pressure due to budgetary constraints and a shortage of personnel. For example, Ewout had seen many colleagues come and go who had succumbed to the high work pressure, a phenomenon he could understand. However, he also witnessed that this placed additional pressure on those who had remained in their roles, including himself. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, he had to work so much overtime that at the end of the period he collapsed. For Heleen, working in the healthcare sector too, this intense period also pushed her over the edge. These experiences correspond with the

existing literature, which has demonstrated a detrimental impact of excessive work hours on mental health (Huxley et al., 2005).

The students also encountered time pressure during their studies, mainly to complete their degrees in a timely manner. There was a defined trajectory for students to adhere to, rather than allowing students to progress at their own pace. For Belle, this entailed having to write her thesis at the same time as doing her full-time internship, which turned out to be undoable. Alternatively, Anna was under pressure to find an internship in time, regardless of its suitability for her. Furthermore, Ines experienced time pressure by having to attend classes throughout the day studying for them in the evenings. This meant that she was in a state of constant activity, with minimal opportunity for relaxation.

4.2.7 Telepressure

Another work factor that can lead to difficulty to relax is the experience of telepressure. This refers to the expectation of maintaining constant availability via electronic communications channels, such as via telephone or email. Most interviewees had experienced this through the receipt of text messages outside of working hours, which they were expected to read and respond to before the next working day. Even more so, they were expected to regularly monitor their email accounts and prepare for their next shift at home. Moreover, they were expected to respond to calls and messages requesting that they take over from colleagues who were unable to work due to illness. This telepressure resulted in a blurring of the distinction between work and leisure time:

> *That's why I couldn't let go of my work. I was always busy thinking about, gosh, how would it go? And I have to read my email in advance, or I have still have to do this or that. [...] So in the end you are only busy with your work and you can't really let go of it in your private life, which means you also sleep worse and you're more tense. (Ewout, healthcare worker)*

This experience was shared by more interviewees and is in accordance with the negative effects of telepressure documented in the literature, as it has been shown to negatively affect people's ability to recover from work-related stress and to relax after work (Barber & Santuzzi, 2014).

4.2.8 Competitive pressure

Finally, individuals may be subject to competitive pressure in their professional or academic careers. Indeed, most interviewees felt a pressure to work hard and demonstrate their capabilities in order to secure a desired position. For some, this entailed working hard to retain their current position, whereas for others it involved pursuing further career advancement. For example, in Carlo's role as a team leader, he had to demonstrate his continued suitability for the position on an annual basis, otherwise the position would be offered to someone else. As a result, he was constantly aware of the competition in the workplace. Although he saw this as a great motivation, it also constituted a considerable source of pressure for him. Contrastingly, Ewout and Heleen never feared losing their jobs in the healthcare sector. However, as an increasing number of higher-level positions began to require a higher education degree, they both felt pressured to begin studying again to enhance their future employability. For the students, competitive pressure was also present. For instance, the popularity of her field, coupled with the limited number of available positions, placed pressure on Anna to distinguish herself from her peers. Consequently, she felt that she could always do more, like revising an extra time or enhancing her curriculum vitae with extracurricular activities during her holidays. Ultimately, competitive pressure, just as time pressure and telepressure, had a negative affect on the ability to relax and balance work or study with leisure time for most interviewees.

4.3 Societal pressure

4.3.1 Social media

Besides internal pressures and pressure from the immediate environment, the interviewees also reported experiencing pressure from wider society. One of the ways in which this was reinforced was via social media, which all interviewees used. In most cases, the content they encountered online did not influence their behaviour, but rather affected their emotional state. It was perceived that social media can make one conscious of the deficiencies in one's life rather than the positive aspects. For example, the accomplishments of others posted on social media led to feelings of pressure regarding their own achievements. Carlo (team leader) noted that the idealised lifestyles depicted on social media are not attainable, which can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction about one's own life. This feeling was echoed by Heleen (healthcare worker), who perceived social media as exerting pressure to find a partner as a prerequisite for happiness. The absence of a partner in her life was frequently underscored in a negative light by the prominence of relationships on social media. For Belle (student) and Diede (healthcare worker), social media led them to have FoMO (Fear of Missing Out), a concept widely recognised among young adults. When they observed others engaging in enjoyable activities and socialising, they experienced a sense of pressure to participate. This phenomenon also manifested when they had already decided to remain at home and relax for the evening. These negative effects of social media were also found in the literature, including a positive correlation between social media use and burnout (Han et al, 2020; Chou & Edge, 2012; De Vries & Kühne, 2015). In essence, social media made the interviewees feel pressured about their own lives rather than being content with it.

4.3.2 Choice overload

Another factor that led several of the interviewees to question their life decisions, was the abundance of opportunities available to young adults in this era. These interviewees reported feeling overwhelmed by a choice overload. As young adults, they were at a stage in their lives where they were actively contemplating their future aspirations. This entailed a consideration of the type of study and employment they wished to pursue, the nature of the relationships they wanted and what they valued most in life. As such, they felt pressured to make the right choices that would result in the most favourable outcomes in the future:

> I found it very overwhelming. You don't know if you're choosing the right thing, it feels like every decision could be the wrong one. I have experienced quite a lot of pressure from that, especially in the past year. The questions were, where do I want to go with my life? What do I want to do? What do I want it to look like? How do I want it to feel? [...] There is always something that you have not yet taken into account. And that is also very tiring. (Anna, student)

Nevertheless, this sentiment was not shared by all interviewees. For example, some of the interviewees were certain about their career aspirations and displayed no doubt about their life choices. Thus, the impact of choice overload was observed to vary between interviewees.

4.3.3 Financial pressure

Even when being certain of their personal aspirations, a number of interviewees reported feeling pressured to act in a way that would guarantee financial stability. Some of them indicated that they had not pursued their initial goals but had instead opted for more financially secure alternatives. This was evident in the choice of study or the type of work. For instance, Diede (healthcare worker) had

preferred to pursue a slower pace of life after graduation, but instead took on a full-time position to cover her living costs. Even when she felt the job and its associated pressures were not right for her, she initially persisted due to financial concerns. Later, as her burnout developed, she felt financially pressured to apply for other jobs instead of taking rest:

> *The moment things weren't going well for me, I immediately started applying for other jobs. […] I thought, I will just work somewhere else. I need certainty, I need to have a job. So, I continued to work very hard. (Diede, healthcare worker)*

As such, the financial pressure worsened her situation in the run-up to her burnout. For Ewout and Heleen, both healthcare workers, financial pressure was a significant factor in their decision to begin studying again while continuing to work. However, this only added pressure for them in the development of their burnout. Similarly, despite the difficulties she encountered during her studies, Fieke felt a financial pressure to continue in order to avoid a financial penalty for failing to complete her degree, which contributed to her burnout. For some of the interviewees, financial pressure thus played an important role in the development of their burnout.

4.3.4 Performance culture

Some interviewees perceived the pressure to work hard to be embedded within the performance culture of our society. Carlo (team leader) stated that due to the nature of our capitalist society, everyone is expected to do their utmost best. Some interviewees reported feeling pressure to conform to these societal norms, for example by pursuing full-time employment or further studies, even when these were not their own personal preferences. Several interviewees experienced societal disapproval as a result of their educational choices that did not conform to societal norms. This pressure made them feel as if they were not fulfilling their full potential. For example, Fieke (as student) often felt a pressure to defend her choice of studies, as she was often asked what the point of her studies was. The performance culture was perceived to be pervasive, manifesting even in instances of relaxation. Some interviewees reflected on the presence of performance culture in television series they would watch during their formative years as young adults, noting a particular emphasis on careers. In her role as a healthcare worker, Heleen encountered this in the form of a requirement at work to regularly reflect on her performance and develop new professional aspirations. The necessity to continuously improve oneself placed her under considerable pressure:

> *You always have to look at what you're going to work on, what your goals are, what growth you want to experience. It makes me think, if you do your job well and you are comfortable where you are, why does it always have to be more? […] It really bothers me. (Heleen, healthcare worker)*

In addition to these societal expectations regarding career success, some interviewees also indicated experiencing pressure from other societal norms for young adults in particular. Namely, they would feel a pressure from societal norms to buy a house, start a family and marry, which are often perceived as markers of a successful and fulfilling life by society. The standards of what a young adult's life should entail constituted a source of pressure for the interviewees and can be regarded as a consequence of the performance culture in society (Wienen, 2021).

4.3.5 Pressure to be happy

In addition to the pursuit of success, the interviewees indicated that they frequently experienced a great pressure from society to be happy. In other words, there was no room for feelings of sadness or the expression of other emotions. This is in line with the literature on the emphasis on happiness in

our current society, leading to the intensification of negative emotions and stress (Dejonckheere, 2022). Multiple interviewees found it difficult to respond when asked how they were doing. Due to societal expectations, they felt pressured to provide a positive response, even if it was not true. The act of admitting to feeling unwell was perceived as a taboo in society. In the period preceding her burnout, Diede (healthcare worker) found that when she did disclose her genuine emotions with others, they were often reluctant to engage with her narrative. As a result, she attempted to suppress her own feelings, maintaining her active social life and pretending to be enjoying herself despite experiencing physical and mental discomfort. Similarly, Ines (student) perceived herself to be the only individual experiencing significant difficulties at her age, which induced feelings of isolation and solitude during the development of her burnout. From societal expectations, she derived the impression that she should be enjoying a carefree and fulfilling period as a young adult, with the freedom to pursue anything she desired. Upon disclosing her experience to others, she discovered that she was not alone in her situation, yet that there was a striking absence of discourse surrounding negative emotions. The stigmatisation of negative emotions and the consequence of experiencing loneliness has also been found in the existing literature (Mauss et al., 2012).

Furthermore, when discussing the event of her burnout with others, Ines (student) stated that she still feels pressure to convince others that her burnout was genuine. In her experience, there is a common misconception that burnout is exclusive to individuals who work excessively. She often receives a lot of questions whether it is possible to develop burnout in such a young age group. Notwithstanding the pressure, she persists in disclosing her experiences with the aim of dismantling the taboo:

> *It is of course not something casual, but the more I casually say it or talk about it, the less taboo it becomes among these people. Even if I take away some of the taboo from ten people, I am already very happy. Because yes, there is a lot of taboo. (Ines, student)*

5. Conclusion and discussion

The objective of this study was to examine the different sources of pressure that play a role in the development of burnout among young adults. The study concentrated on the perceptions of young adults who had experienced burnout, with the aim of exploring their perspectives. To this end, nine semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to provide insights into the personal experiences of young adults who had recently experienced burnout. The role of internal pressure, pressure from the immediate environment and societal pressure in the development of their burnout were identified through an analysis of the interviewees' perceptions.

The findings of this qualitative research indicate that the different sources of pressure experienced by young adults are perceived to play different roles in the development of burnout. Internal pressure was perceived as the basis of burnout, manifesting as a constant factor over an extended period of time. In the absence of additional sources of pressure, the internal pressure was considered to be manageable. However, as both the literature and the interviews indicated, individuals who experience burnout are often catered to the needs of others (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach, 1976). This makes them particularly sensitive to the expectations of others. In addition, pressure from the work or academic environment was perceived to hinder the ability to relax and the recovery from stress, a finding in line with the literature (Huxley et al., 2005; Barber & Santuzzi, 2014). The addition of pressure from the immediate environment resulted in an overwhelming level of pressure experienced. Consequently, pressure from the immediate environment was perceived to be a trigger or turning point in the development of burnout. Furthermore, societal expectations had the effect of exacerbating feelings of self-doubt and a perceived lack of understanding surrounding burnout, demonstrated by the interviews as well as the literature (Han et al., 2020; Mauss et al., 2012). Whereas pressure from the immediate environment was perceived as a daily, direct source of pressure, societal pressure was considered to have a more indirect effect. Consequently, societal pressure was identified as an intensifier of other pressures. Ultimately, burnout was perceived as the result of a complex interplay of different sources of pressure.

The findings of this study are in accordance with the expectations outlined in the theoretical framework. In light of the existing literature, it was expected that a multitude of sources of pressure would be perceived as relevant by young adults in relation to the development of their burnout. The findings are also consistent with the conceptual model. The initial ring of the rainbow, in closest proximity to the young adult, functioned as an inner layer of pressure. Additionally, pressure from the immediate environment added extra pressure on to this. A third layer of pressure was exerted by societal pressure. These findings contribute to the ongoing debate on the conceptualisation of burnout. While institutions such as the WHO (2019) assert that burnout is solely a result of workplace stress, the findings presented here align with studies indicating that burnout can also result from other sources of pressure (Childs & Stoeber, 2012; Meussen & Van Laar, 2018; Roskam et al., 2017). Furthermore, the research contributes to a currently limited body of literature on the role of pressure in burnout. Whereas the existing literature focuses on stress as the cause of burnout, this research provides deeper insight into the underlying sources of pressure. In addition, this research offers new insights into the experiences of burnout among the demographic of young adults. Thereby, the research has provided an overview of the different sources of pressure that play a role in the development of burnout as perceived by young adults.

In considering the validity of the results, it is important to acknowledge both the strengths and limitations of the study. The nine semi-structured in-depth interviews provided a comprehensive view of perspectives, with no new themes emerging in the last set of interviews, thereby reaching saturation. Furthermore, the participants in the interviews constituted a diverse group in terms of

age, gender, educational background and main economic activity at the time of burnout. As a result, the sample reflected a diversity of perspectives, thereby enhancing the overall validity of the results. However, given that the interviews were conducted after the interviewees had recovered from burnout, this may have introduced a degree of recall bias. This may compromise the validity of the results, as the interviewees may not have remembered the circumstances surrounding the development of their burnout with full accuracy. During the interviews, the interviewees occasionally acknowledged this phenomenon, stating that they required a moment to consider a particular question or that they did not remember certain details. Consequently, this reduces the validity of the results. However, ethical considerations led to the decision to only interview individuals who had recovered from burnout, thus avoiding any additional burden on those still suffering from it. By focusing on the perceptions of the interviewees rather than factual circumstances, the study sought to reduce the effect of recall bias.

To further this line of research, a number of directions for further investigation could be pursued in order to enhance our understanding of the research topic. Firstly, it is important to note that this research was conducted with a focus on Dutch young adults and Dutch society. Consequently, the findings can be considered specific to this context. Future research could therefore focus on other cultural contexts to explore whether similar results would be observed in different cultural contexts. Moreover, despite the diversity of the group of interviewees, none of them had children in the period during which their burnout developed. Meanwhile, the pressure experienced during parenthood has been identified in the literature as a significant factor in the development of burnout (Meussen & Van Laar, 2018; Roskam et al., 2017). Consequently, further work on this topic could attempt to specifically include parents in the sample, in order to gain further insights into these perspectives as well.

A takeaway from this research is that it revealed that self-awareness and the ability to recognise and communicate one's limits are crucial elements in the ability to effectively cope with pressure. These findings are consistent with existing literature on the role of self-awareness in the development of burnout (Maslach, 1982; Kearney et al., 2009; Ouliaris, 2019). It may therefore be proposed that a greater focus on developing an accurate understanding of oneself and on being able to communicate this clearly could serve to enhance one's coping mechanisms in the face of pressure. While our current society may not have this as a prominent focus, it should be considered a relevant area for future intervention. For instance, educational institutions may provide a safe space for the development of this knowledge. At the same time, it may be possible that individuals who do not experience burnout possess greater self-awareness. This raises the question as to what factors contribute to the discrepancy in self-awareness across individuals. Future research could investigate why some individuals possess greater self-awareness than others. Additionally, it would be beneficial to examine different strategies that can be employed to foster self-awareness among young adults, to combat burnout. Without intervention, the prevalence of burnout will continue to lead to a growing labour shortage in essential sectors. In light of our ageing society, this will become an even bigger problem (NOS, 2022). It would be beneficial for society as a whole to support these individuals in their development of self-awareness, in a manner similar to the support they have always extended to others.

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Appendix B: Semi-structured interview guide

Introductie

Burn-outs zijn een groeiend probleem onder jongvolwassenen. Ik doe onderzoek naar de verschillende soorten druk die hierbij een rol spelen, volgens jongvolwassenen die zelf ervaring met burn-out hebben gehad. Ik ben dus vooral geïnteresseerd in jouw eigen ervaring en perspectief, om in mijn scriptie een beter beeld te kunnen geven van wat er speelt bij jongvolwassenen. Er is al meer geschreven over de rol van stress bij een burn-out, maar ik kijk specifiek naar de invloed van druk. Hierbij onderscheid ik druk als een belangrijke oorzaak van stress, gevormd door verwachtingen. Vaak ervaren mensen druk als er iets afhangt van hun prestatie. Deze druk kan vanuit jezelf komen, vanuit je directe omgeving en vanuit de maatschappij. Tijdens dit interview wil ik graag jouw ervaringen met deze drie soorten druk met je bespreken.

Het interview zal ongeveer een uur duren, afhankelijk van hoeveel informatie je zou willen delen met mij. De informatie die je deelt zal ik anonimiseren, zodat het niet terug te leiden is naar jou. Het interview wordt, zoals beschreven in het toestemmingsformulier, opgenomen met mijn telefoon. Je kunt op elk moment tijdens het interview aangeven dat je wilt stoppen of pauzeren, zonder reden te hoeven geven. Ook kun je je deelname nog terugtrekken tot het moment dat ik mijn scriptie inlever (12 juli). Heb je nog vragen voordat we beginnen?

1. Persoonlijke introductie

Als eerste ben ik benieuwd naar wie jij bent.

Zou je wat over jezelf kunnen vertellen?

Wat is je leeftijd?

Wat voor opleiding heb je gedaan?

Werk je, zo ja, wat voor werk doe je?

En woon je alleen, of met huisgenoten, familie, een partner, kinderen?

2. Burn-out ervaring

Je hebt aangegeven dat je een diagnose hebt gehad voor een burn-out. Ik ben benieuwd naar de omstandigheden van je burn-out.

Wanneer had je deze ervaring?

Hoe zag jouw leven er op dat moment uit? (kinderen/studie/baan)

Sinds wanneer voelde je je weer beter?

Ziet je leven er nu anders uit? Ben je bijvoorbeeld terug aan het werk gegaan, werk je nu minder, heb je je studie weer opgepakt?

3. Interne druk

Ik wil het nu graag met je hebben over de rol die interne druk volgens jou heeft gespeeld bij je burn-out. Hiermee bedoel ik druk die je op jezelf legt, bijvoorbeeld om goed te presteren of bepaalde doelen te bereiken. Dit kan samengaan met je persoonlijkheid.

In hoeverre heb je het idee dat je druk op jezelf legt?
Zou je jezelf als perfectionistisch omschrijven, of ambitieus? Ben je kritisch naar jezelf?

In welke situaties in je leven leg je jezelf vooral veel druk op?
Is dit in je werk/gezin/studie?

In hoeverre vind je het belangrijk hoe andere mensen over je denken?
Op wat voor manier uit zich dat?

In hoeverre vind je het belangrijk om andere mensen een plezier te doen of te helpen?
Heb je vaak moeite met nee zeggen?
In hoeverre heeft dit geleid tot overbelaste gevoelens?

We hebben het nu gehad over in hoeverre je interne druk ervaart.
Zijn er nog meer manieren waarop je deze interne druk meemaakt?

Ik ben benieuwd of dit ook van invloed is geweest op de ontwikkeling van je burnout.
Hoe zie je de rol van interne druk in oploop van je burn-out?

4. Druk uit de directe omgeving

Een andere bron van druk is soms je directe omgeving: andere mensen, vooral de mensen die dichtbij je staan. Dit kunnen ouders, vrienden of bijvoorbeeld collega's zijn. Ik ben benieuwd in hoeverre druk uit je directe omgeving naar jouw idee heeft bijgedragen aan je burn-out.

Kun je beschrijven in hoeverre je druk ervoer vanuit je ouders of andere familieleden om op een bepaald niveau te presteren in je werk, studie of op andere gebieden?
Hoe reageerde je op hun verwachtingen?

In hoeverre ervoer je druk vanuit vrienden?
- Bijvoorbeeld in de vorm van sociale verplichtingen?
Dit kan bijvoorbeeld zijn dat vrienden verwachtten dat je meer tijd met hen zal doorbrengen.
- Of bijvoorbeeld druk om net zo'n leven te leiden als je vrienden?
(avontuurlijk/reislustig/sportief/succesvol)

In hoeverre ervoer je druk vanuit collega's of leidinggevenden om op een bepaald niveau te presteren? (OF: vanuit docenten/medestudenten)
Hoe ben je omgegaan met deze druk?

In hoeverre ervoer je tijdsdruk op je werk/ door je studie?
Wat deed je om hiermee om te gaan?
Bleef je langer op je werk/ aan je studie?

Werd er verwacht dat je buiten werktijden/werkdagen (studie) bereikbaar was?
Hoe heeft dit bijgedragen aan een gevoel van druk?
Maakte dit het moeilijk om je werk/studie los te laten buiten deze tijden?

In hoeverre voelde je druk om je baan te kunnen behouden?/ om op een bepaalde manier te presteren zodat je meer baankansen hebt?
Was er sprake van competitie op de werkvloer/ studie?

We hebben het nu gehad over in hoeverre je druk vanuit je directe omgeving ervaart.
Zijn er nog andere manieren waarop of wanneer je deze druk ervaart?

Ik ben benieuwd of dit ook van invloed is geweest op de ontwikkeling van je burnout.
Hoe heb je de rol van druk uit de directe omgeving in oploop van je burn-out ervaren?

5. Maatschappelijke druk

Ook vanuit de maatschappij kan er veel druk liggen op jongvolwassenen. De normen in een maatschappij kunnen ervoor zorgen dat er van je verwacht wordt dat je leven er op een bepaalde manier uitziet. Ook zijn er verwachtingen van wat normaal is en wat afwijkend is. Maatschappelijke druk kan bijvoorbeeld voelbaar zijn door de prestatiecultuur of middels sociale vergelijking.
Een manier waarop sociale vergelijking vaak plaatsvindt is via sociale media, vooral onder jongvolwassenen.

Maak je gebruik van sociale media, en zo ja, in hoeverre heb je het idee dat verhalen van anderen jouw welzijn beïnvloedt/beïnvloedde?

Verhalen op social media zijn vaak vooral positief. Hoe ervaar jij dat?

In hoeverre ervaar je hierdoor druk om je leven op een bepaalde manier te leiden?
- Bijvoorbeeld om het altijd leuk te hebben, veel vrienden te hebben, vaak uit te gaan?

In de huidige maatschappij hebben jongvolwassenen ook erg veel keuzemogelijkheden. Dit speelt bijvoorbeeld in hun keuze voor een studie, voor een relatie, voor een baan etc.
Heb je wel eens druk ervaren door de vele mogelijkheden die jongvolwassenen tegenwoordig hebben?
Heb je het idee dat je wel eens overweldigd was door alle keuzemogelijkheden in de periode voor de oploop van je burn-out?

Heb je op andere manieren maatschappelijke druk gevoeld tijdens de ontwikkeling van je burn-out?
Zou je hier voorbeelden van kunnen noemen?

Ik ben benieuwd of maatschappelijke druk volgens jou van invloed is geweest op de ontwikkeling van je burnout.
Hoe zou je de rol van maatschappelijke druk in oploop van je burn-out omschrijven?

6. Afsluiting

We hebben het nu gehad over de rol van interne druk, druk uit de directe omgeving en maatschappelijke druk.
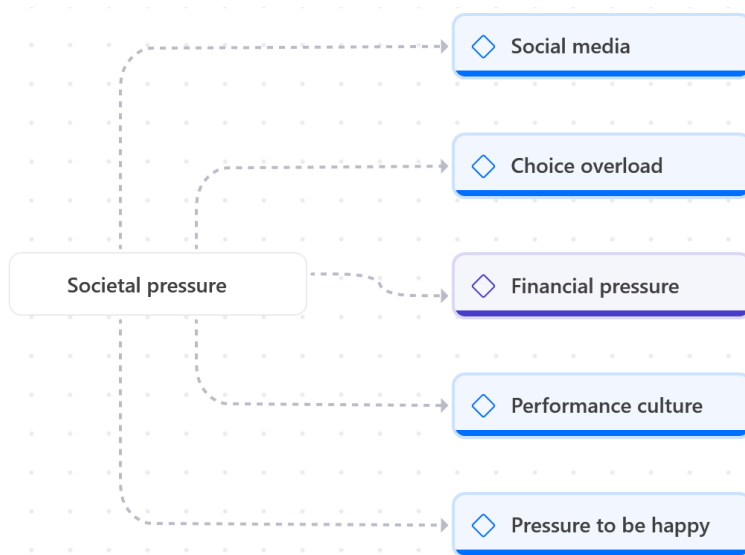
Heb je op een andere manier druk ervaren tijdens de periode voorafgaand aan je burn-out die we nog niet besproken hebben?

Is er iets anders dat je nog zou willen bespreken dat nog niet aan bod is gekomen?
Zijn er dingen die je graag zou willen benadrukken voordat we het interview afronden?

(Woorden van dank)
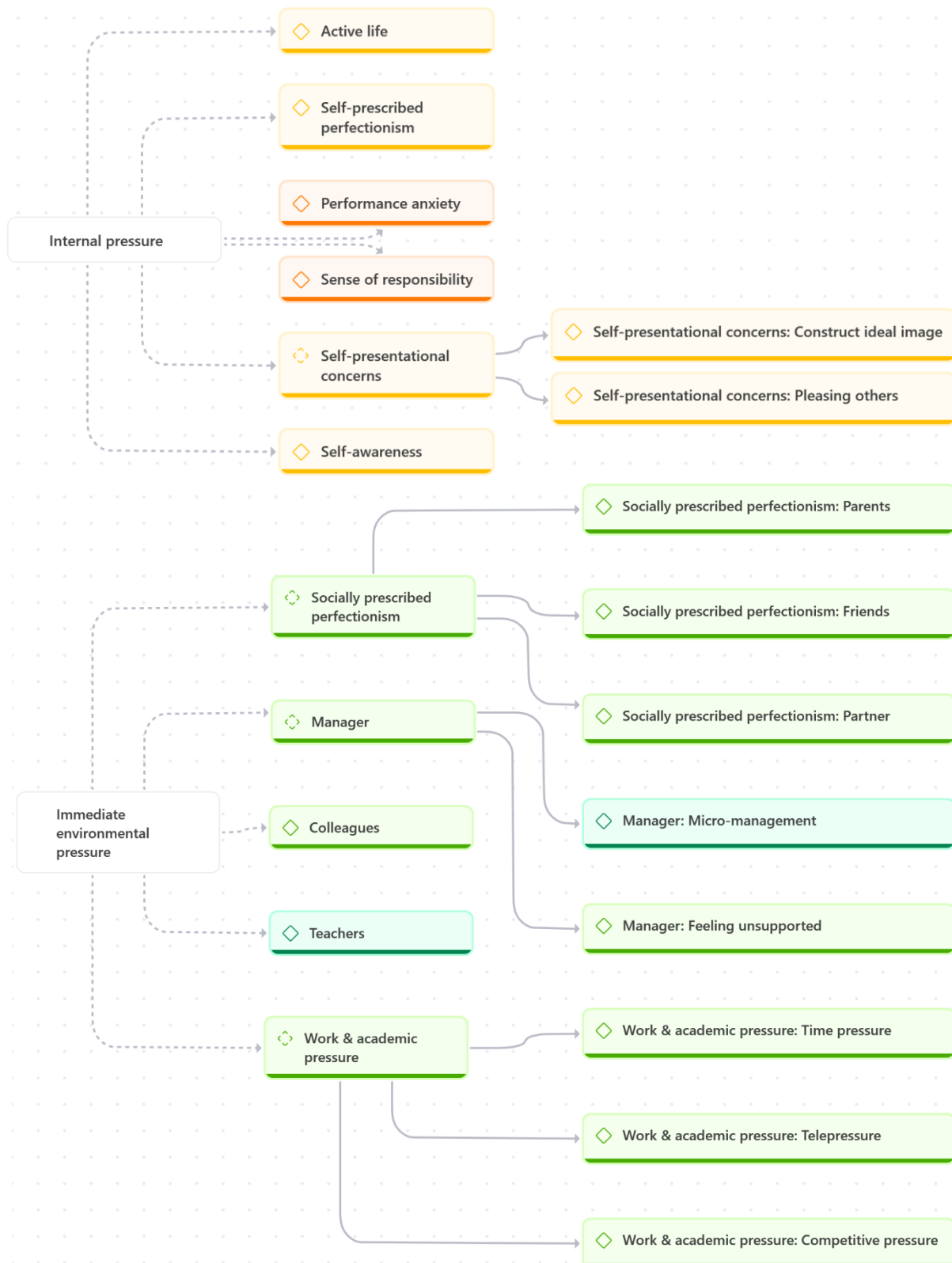
In each tree, the lighter colours indicate deductive codes, while the darker shades refer to inductive codes.

Appendix D: Research Data Management Plan

1. General	
1.1 Name & title of thesis	Lotte Drost Burnout Among Young Adults: The Role of Different Sources of Pressure
1.2 *(if applicable)* Organisation. Provide details on the organisation where the research takes place if this applies (in case of an internship).	N/A

2 Data collection – the creation of data	
2.1. Which data formats or which sources are used in the project? For example: - theoretical research, using literature and publicly available resources - Survey Data - Field Data - Interviews	Interviews with young adults aged between 18 and 35 years old, who have experienced a burnout recently
2.2 Methods of data collection What method(s) do you use for the collection of data. (Tick all boxes that apply)	☐ Structured individual interviews ☒ Semi-structured individual interviews ☐ Structured group interviews ☐ Semi-structured group interviews ☐ Observations ☐ Survey(s) ☐ Experiment(s) in real life (interventions) ☐ Secondary analyses on existing data sets (if so: please also fill in 2.3) ☐ Public sources ☐ Other (explain):
2.3. (If applicable): if you have selected 'Secondary analyses on existing datasets': who provides the data set?	☐ Data is supplied by the University of Groningen. ☐ Data have been supplied by an external party. (Please mention the party here). N/A

3 Storage, Sharing and Archiving	
3.1 Where will the (raw) data be stored *during* research? If you want to store research data, it is good practice to ask yourself some questions: • How big is my dataset at the end of my research?	☐ X-drive of UG ☐ Y-drive of UG ☐ (Shared) UG Google Drive ☐ Unishare ☒ Personal laptop & phone ☐ External devices (USB, harddisk, NAS)

• Do I want to collaborate on the data? • How confidential is my data? • How do I make sure I do not lose my data? Need more information? Take a look at the site of the Digital Competence Centre (DCC)) Feel free to contact the DCC for questions: dcc@rug.nl	☐ Other (explain):
3.2 Where are you planning to store / archive the data after you have finished your research? Please explain where and for how long. Also explain who has access to these data NB do not use a personal UG network or google drive for archiving data!	☐ X-drive of UG network ☐ Y-drive of UG network ☐ (Shared) UG Google Drive ☐ Unishare ☐ In a repository (i.e. DataverseNL ☒ Other (explain): The recordings of the interviews will be deleted from my phone as soon as they are secured on my laptop. The recordings and transcripts will be saved in a different folder than the consent forms, both encrypted. After my thesis has been graded, I will delete all data. This will probably be in July. The laptop is only used by me and is protected by a password.
3.3 Sharing of data With whom will you be sharing data during your research?	☐ University of Groningen ☐ Universities or other parties in Europe ☐ Universities or other parties outside Europe ☒ I will not be sharing data

4. Personal data	
4.1 Collecting personal data Will you be collecting personal data? If you are conducting research with personal data you have to comply to the General Data Privacy Regulation (GDPR). Please fill in the questions found in the appendix 3 on personal data.	Yes
If the answer to 4.1 is 'no', please skip the section below and proceed to section 5	

4.2 What kinds of categories of people are involved? Have you determined whether these people are vulnerable in any way (see FAQ)? If so, your supervisor will need to agree.	My research project involves: ☐ Adults (not vulnerable) ≥ 18 years ☐ Minors < 16 years ☐ Minors < 18 years ☐ Patients ☒ (other) vulnerable persons, namely (please provide an explanation what makes these persons vulnerable) I will research young adults (18-35 years old) who have experienced a burnout recently. I have explicitly chosen not to include people who are currently suffering from a burnout, as this is a specifically vulnerable group, but instead focus on those who have already recovered.
4.3 Will participants be enlisted in the project without their knowledge and/or consent? (E.g., via covert observation of people in public places, or by using social media data.)	No If yes, please explain if, when and how you will inform the participants about the study.
4.4 Categories of personal data that are processed. Mention all types of data that you systematically collect and store. If you use particular kinds of software, then check what the software is doing as well. Of course, always ask yourself if you need all categories of data for your project.	☐ Name and address details ☐ Telephone number ☐ Email address ☐ Nationality ☐ IP-addresses and/or device type ☒ Job information ☐ Location data ☐ Race or ethnicity ☐ Political opinions ☒ Physical or mental health ☐ Information about a person's sex life or sexual orientation ☐ Religious or philosophical beliefs ☐ Membership of a trade union ☐ Biometric information ☐ Genetic information ☐ Other (please explain below):

4.5 Technical/organisational measures Select which of the following security measures are used to protect personal data.	☒ Pseudonymisatio ☒ Anonymisation ☒ File encryption ☒ Encryption of storage ☒ Encryption of transport device ☐ Restricted access rights ☐ VPN ☐ Regularly scheduled backups ☒ Physical locks (rooms, drawers) ☐ None of the above ☐ Other (describe below):
4.6 Will any personal data be transferred to organisations within countries outside the European Economic Area (EU, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein)? If the research takes places in a country outside the EU/EEA, then please also indicate this.	No
5 – Final comments	
Do you have any other information about the research data that was not addressed in this template that you think is useful to mention?	

Appendix E: Information letter

Onderzoek: Burn-out onder jongvolwassenen en de rol van verschillende soorten druk

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

Beste,

Bedankt voor je interesse in deelname aan dit onderzoek. Deze brief vertelt je meer over het doel en de methode van het onderzoek. Het is belangrijk om deze brief goed door te lezen, zodat je een goed beeld hebt van wat deelname aan dit onderzoek betekent. Als er iets onduidelijk is, dan kun je altijd contact met me opnemen voor vragen via mijn contactgegevens onderaan deze brief.

Doel van het onderzoek

Steeds meer jongvolwassenen krijgen last van een burn-out. Om deze ontwikkeling beter te kunnen begrijpen, is er meer onderzoek nodig naar de achterliggende factoren die hierbij een rol spelen. Er is al onderzoek gedaan naar de rol van stress bij burn-out, maar dit onderzoek probeert meer inzicht te krijgen in de verschillende soorten druk die meespelen bij burn-out. Om dit te onderzoeken hoop ik rond de tien jongvolwassen tussen de leeftijd 18 en 35 jaar te kunnen interviewen over hun burn-out ervaring.

Als je zelf tussen de 18 en 35 jaar bent en recent een burn-out hebt gehad, dan zou je bijdrage aan dit onderzoek erg waardevol zijn.

Deelname

Bij deelname aan dit onderzoek doe je mee aan een 1 op 1 interview over jouw ervaringen van verschillende soorten druk bij je burn-out. Het interview kan plaatsvinden op een locatie die jij prettig vindt, bijvoorbeeld bij jou thuis of in een ruimte van de universiteit. Het zal ongeveer een uur tot anderhalf uur in beslag nemen.

Deelname aan dit onderzoek is volledig op vrijwillige basis. Je kunt op elk moment beslissen om toch niet mee te doen of om je bijdrage in te trekken, tot het moment dat ik mijn scriptie inlever (12 juli). Ook kun je er altijd voor kiezen om vragen niet te beantwoorden, zonder hiervoor een reden te geven.

Tijdens het interview word je gevraagd te reflecteren op jouw ervaringen tijdens je burn-out. Dit is natuurlijk gevoelige informatie en dit kan negatieve emoties opwekken. Daarom vraag ik je om alleen deel te nemen aan het onderzoek wanneer je bent hersteld van de burn-out.

Omgang met jouw informatie

Het interview zal worden opgenomen met een telefoon, zodat het na afloop in tekst kan worden omgezet. De gegevens worden hierna verwijderd van de telefoon en opgeslagen in een beveiligde map op een persoonlijke, met wachtwoord beveiligde computer. Je naam zal worden veranderd in een pseudoniem en andere identificerende informatie wordt verwijderd uit de teksten, zodat de gegevens niet kunnen worden teruggeleid naar jou. Alleen ik heb toegang tot de data.

De data zal alleen worden gebruikt voor het schrijven van mijn masterscriptie en zal hierna verwijderd worden.

Ethische goedkeuring

Dit onderzoek heeft ethische goedkeuring gekregen van mijn scriptiebegeleider dr. Roselinde van der Wiel. Tijdens het onderzoek zal ik mij houden aan ethische standaarden.

Toestemmingsformulier

Voordat je deelneemt aan het onderzoek, word je gevraagd een toestemmingsformulier te ondertekenen. Dit betekent dat je toestemming geeft voor het opnemen en gebruik van de inhoud van het interview voor mijn scriptie. Ook betekent het dat je het recht hebt om op elk moment te stoppen met je deelname, totdat ik mijn scriptie heb ingeleverd.

Meer informatie

Voor meer informatie of vragen kun je mij, Lotte Drost, altijd mailen op l.m.drost@student.rug.nl

Toestemmingsformulier voor het onderzoeksproject 'Burn-out onder jongvolwassenen en de rol van verschillende soorten druk'.
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

- o Ik heb de informatie over het onderzoeksproject en het doel van de gegevensverwerking gelezen en begrepen.

- o Ik heb de gelegenheid gehad om vragen te stellen en ben tevreden met de antwoorden.

- o Ik stem vrijwillig in met mijn deelname.

- o Ik ben geïnformeerd over mijn rechten.

- o Ik begrijp dat ik me tot het inleveren van de scriptie (12 juli) op elk moment kan terugtrekken zonder opgave van reden.

- o Ik begrijp hoe mijn gegevens zullen worden verwerkt en beschermd.

- o Ik stem in met de opname van het interview.

Naam en handtekening van de participant. Datum.

Ik verklaar dat ik de onderzoekdeelnemer heb geïnformeerd over het onderzoek. Ik zal de deelnemer op de hoogte stellen van zaken die zijn/haar deelname aan het onderzoek kunnen beïnvloeden.

Naam en handtekening van de onderzoeker. Datum.