



Aalto University
School of Business

Mikkeli Campus

AN EXAMINATION OF THE MODELING INDUSTRY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE WORK WELL-BEING OF FASHION MODELS

Ella Hekkala

International Business
Bachelor's Thesis
Supervisor: Russell Warhurst
Date of approval: 8 April 2021

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Objectives

The main objective of this study was to examine how fashion models perceive their work environment and their own work well-being. The first research objective aimed to analyze the work environment of fashion models. The second research objective attempted to research how fashion models perceive their own well-being at work. The last research objective aims to understand what aspects potentially hinder the work well-being of fashion models.

Summary

The research for this thesis was conducted through 12 semi-structured interviews with fashion models. When applying a thorough analysis of previously published literature on the topic, as well as the findings of the interview data, it was found that the dynamic environment of the modeling industry poses a threat to the work well-being of fashion models. Models work well-being was also analyzed through Self-Determination Theory.

Conclusions

To understand the results of the research questions, as well as research objectives, two frameworks were developed from the material. A conceptual framework was presented in the literature review based on the literature, which discusses how the uncertainties and pressures of being a model lead to hindered well-being. The interview data suggested new major findings, and thus the conceptual framework was developed. The new framework is centered around how the challenges of the modeling occupation hinder model's work well-being (rather than just uncertainties and pressures).

Key words: well-being, well-being at work, fashion models, modeling industry, fashion industry, self-determination theory

Language: English

Grade:

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The world we live in now is more visual than ever where beauty, fame, and success are admired. Most people associate these features with fashion models – as they could be perceived as the origin of modern definitions of beauty. The presentation of fashion models in mass media is often associated with a luxurious lifestyle consisting of glamour and beauty, as well as traveling the world at a young age (Carr & Mercer, 2017). The glamorized version of fashion modeling is why young women often admire the occupation (Volonté, 2019), and consider fashion models to be their role models. Since models are admired for their physical attractiveness, one could assume that models are happy and have higher well-being because of their status (Meyer et al., 2007; Datta Gupta et al., 2016).

Although well-being at work has been covered considering many industries, an interesting, and arguably important, field of business lacks coverage in well-being research: the work well-being of fashion models. The concept of positive psychology has attained increased attention over the past two decades, that is, research on well-being as well as happiness (Van de Weijer et al., 2018). Despite the lack of a coherent definition for well-being, the importance of promoting well-being at work has been highlighted in a multitude of studies (e.g., Harter et al., 2003; Danna & Griffin, 1999).

The topic of models' work well-being has numerous reasons to describe its importance. Firstly, studying well-being is of high importance, as well-being relates to all the aspects that can aid a person in perceiving their life as valuable and worthy (Schulte & Vainio, 2010). Moreover, fashion models support one of the world's biggest industries, the fashion industry (Orendorff, 2022). Thus, models are some of the world's most influential marketers, as they have an outstanding global presence. In addition, fashion models ultimately are what makes fashion, fashion. Considering these aspects and that the extent of existing literature on the topic of this thesis is limited, the research in this area holds a vast amount of value.

I, the researcher, had to quit modeling due to the lack of my own personal work well-being. To my own surprise, I found that a lot of models had similar experiences. Thus, it felt natural to conduct further research to examine whether hindered work well-being is a “typical” issue for fashion models. Ergo, I set out to study how fashion models with varying levels of experience in their profession perceive well-being in their work. In the following section I will be defining the research problem and research questions outlined for this study.

1.2. Research problem

Since models are assumed to be living the dream (Volonté, 2019), one may often fail to see any discrepancies in the work well-being of fashion models. Since all that fashion models do is walk runways, travel, and pose to be admired by the rest of the world, right? The power of the modeling industry overshadows the true reality of the most important key players in the industry, the world’s beloved fashion models. Therefore, it is not surprising to see existing literature argue that fashion models have lower well-being than non-models their age with similar backgrounds (Meyer et al., 2007).

The research problem that this bachelor’s thesis aims to study are the factors that influence the work well-being of fashion models. The extent of existing literature that discusses this topic is limited; however, the existing literature suggests that models may have lower well-being because of their occupation as fashion models, as their legal position at work limits their rights (e.g., Meyer et al., 2007; Mears, 2008; Pinto et al., 2020; Fortune Super et al., 2021). Hence, another image associated with fashion models may be one of drug abuse, their extreme thinness, as well as a less desirable lifestyle (Carr & Mercer, 2017).

The unregulated nature of the modeling industry allows for less than ethical practices (Fortune Super et al., 2021), which has resulted in studies finding that models are at higher risk of eating disorder symptoms and for a higher drive for thinness than non-models to conform to the industry’s strict requirements on body shape and size (Prete et al., 2008; Treasure et al., 2008; Swami & Szmigielska, 2013; Record & Austin, 2016;

Rodgers et al., 2017; Di Corrado et al., 2021; Granshaw, 2021). In addition, fashion models have been stated to be a high-risk group for depression and anxiety due to the nature of the modeling industry, that being facing rejection throughout one's short-lived career (Fortune Super et al., 2021). If models are considered the most attractive people in the world, why have studies discovered that models are prone to having lower well-being than other people of the same backgrounds? Are our role models healthy role models? Or is it the occupation of fashion models that leads models to show limited well-being at work?

Albeit this thesis projects the importance of researching beauty, media, and well-being, this thesis aims to study rather the well-being of our role models of beauty. Therefore, it needs to be examined why previous literature has suggested models to have hindered well-being. The next section will cover the research questions and objectives for this thesis.

1.3. Research questions and objectives

The concept of work well-being is one of subjective nature. Thus, to examine the work well-being of fashion models, the topic must be assessed through the voice of fashion models. Moreover, to aid with the analysis of perceived well-being, I will use the Self-Determination Theory as a guiding tool for understanding the work well-being of fashion models. This thesis will be guided by the following research questions:

1. How do fashion models perceive the dynamic environment of the modeling industry?
2. How do models perceive their work well-being?
3. To what extent is Self-Determination Theory a viable framework for analyzing the work well-being of fashion models?

The questions aim to explore the nature of the modeling industry, and how it can shape a fashion model's perception of their occupation in terms of well-being at work. Thus, this thesis aims to investigate models' subjective perceptions of their occupation through acquiring qualitative data. Hence, to answer the research questions the following research objectives have been constructed:

1. To identify the work environment of fashion models.
2. To examine fashion models' subjective perception of well-being at work.
3. To examine the aspects that may potentially hinder fashion models' work well-being.

To approach and answer the research questions and objectives mentioned above, this thesis will begin by offering a thorough coverage of previous literature on the topic. A conceptual framework that summarizes the factors affecting fashion models' well-being will be presented. Following the literature review, the methodology section will explain why qualitative research methods were selected to investigate this topic. Next, the findings and analysis section will cover the data generated from the semi-structured interviews with fashion models. Following the results, the discussion section will compare the findings of the interview data in light of the literature. The discussion will provide an improved conceptual framework. Finally, this thesis will provide a conclusion to finalize answering the research questions and objectives above.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review covers the literature on the connections between well-being (at work) and fashion models. This literature review covers fashion models and their work environments and defines well-being, as well as well-being at work. To begin analyzing the work well-being of models, I will present the Self-Determination Theory applied to fashion models. Self-Determination Theory has been argued to be a viable framework for discussing well-being, which is why it will be used to lead the conversation. After covering the theoretical aspects and concepts of well-being, I will explore other factors that affect a model's well-being, which are: the drive for thinness, how rejection is handled in a competitive industry, and the employment structure of models. Lastly, I will represent a conceptual framework that can be used to describe the well-being of models considering the findings made in this literature review.

2.1. Fashion models and their work environments

In this section, I will discuss who a fashion model is and what their purpose is in the modeling industry, as well as their employment structure. The work environment of a fashion model is ultimately a factor that can hinder a model's well-being; thus, I will cover a few points to connect fashion models and their work environments to their work well-being. Although fashion models work for the fashion industry, I will refer to fashion models working for the modeling industry, as the fashion industry includes a multitude of smaller and more niche industries (Terrell, 2019).

The definition of a fashion model has been clarified as "a person employed to display clothes by wearing them" (ODE, 2010: 1137). Moreover, Wissinger (2009: 276) defines a fashion model as "someone whose job entails posing for photographs and traveling the circuit of designer shows to walk fashion runways". A fashion model's purpose is threefold: first, a model can be a part of the production process of clothes, which includes fitting into sample-sized clothing. Second, models can walk fashion shows. Third, a model can do photoshoots that are in turn used for either advertising purposes (to promote brands), or fashion editorials (as seen in magazines). All these processes require the models to fit into the sample sizes offered by fashion designers,

which are 36-38 EU/ 4-6 UK size clothes (Volonté, 2019). A size 36 EU is often the second smallest clothing size offered in women's clothing stores, and models have further been claimed to be even smaller than the required sizes (Mears, 2010). To add to this, models are further instructed to maintain the measurements of 86cm around their bust, 61cm around their waist, and 86cm around their hips. In addition, models are typically no shorter than 175cm (Mears, 2008).

Fashion models are independent contractors rather than employees of the agency they work for, preventing them from gaining any employee benefits such as minimum wage, mandatory breaks, or further safety protections (e.g., Mears, 2008; Rodgers et al., 2017; Pinto et al., 2020; Fortune Super et al., 2021). Moreover, "the clients can pay the models in trade, meaning just clothes, not cash" (Sodomsky, 2014: 296), meaning that traditional payment for work is not a given. In addition, modeling agencies have been reported to exercise vast amounts of power over models and the development of their careers (Rodgers et al., 2017), thereby giving fashion models little to no autonomy. This control can limit a model's eligibility for the few protections that exist to support independent contractors (Pinto et al., 2020). Eatough and Spector (2014) found that a lack of control and power over one's schedule can result in poor health and well-being, feelings of anxiety, and thus harm job, as well as life, satisfaction.

The modeling industry also idealizes young and thin bodies (Turriago, 2016), which leads models to leave or even be dropped from the agencies they work for quite rapidly (Mears & Finlay, 2005). Hence, a fashion model's career peaks in their late teens and may end in their mid-twenties due to the constant influx of younger and thinner models (Mears & Finlay, 2005). Although a career as a model is short-lived, models may often decide to form agencies of their own, or coach other younger models. Thus, even though the career as a model is short, a model can choose to stay within the industry (Bebbington, 2016). However, it is a different question to consider if models want to stay within the industry. Considering the above-mentioned points, it is important to study the well-being of fashion models to break the anxiety-ridden traditions of the industry.

2.2. Well-being at work

In this section, I will cover the definitions of well-being, health, and well-being at work. Since most adults spend most of their life working (Harter et al., 2003), it is imperative to understand the components of well-being, as well as well-being at work. It is also important to note that well-being is not just the absence of disease and/or negative feelings, but the presence of wellness (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009).

2.2.1. Definition of well-being and health

Well-being is a multifaceted concept that includes a variety of different definitions, and interpretations. Waddell and Burton (2006: 4) define well-being as “the subjective state of being healthy, happy, contented, comfortable, and satisfied with one’s life”, thus well-being is composed of physical, material, social, emotional, and development & activity dimensions (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Waddell & Burton, 2006; Schulte & Vainio, 2010). Furthermore, well-being covers the various non-work-related satisfactions enjoyed by individuals (e.g., satisfaction with one’s social life, family life, spirituality), work-related satisfactions (e.g., satisfaction with one’s income, promotion opportunities, the job itself, colleagues), and one’s general health (Danna & Griffin, 1999).

Health itself has been defined as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being” by the World Health Organization (2018), and it has been even argued that there is no health without mental health (Prince et al., 2007). Considering the abundance of subjective aspects constructing a person’s well-being, it is important to address the root of these subjective feelings: the mind. Therefore, it is essential to define mental health as well.

The World Health Organization (2018) states that mental health is the state of well-being where one can realize their own abilities and can cope with regular stress, and further work productively to contribute to their society. Promoting mental health has further effects than improving psychological well-being, as individuals who have been documented to suffer from mental illnesses (such as depression, anxiety, etc.) are at

a higher risk of engaging in unhealthy lifestyle practices. Some of these include poor nutrition, substance abuse, and failure to visit healthcare practitioners (Vreeland, 2007). Ultimately, each of these can have a detrimental effect on physical well-being, and adversely on social well-being. Thus, promoting mental health improves physical well-being as well, which is why mental health is of utmost importance in establishing well-being.

2.2.2. Defining well-being at work

Although it is necessary to promote well-being as it can positively shape an individual's perspective of their own life, it is also essential to address the differences between well-being and well-being at work. Schulte and Vainio (2010) outline that well-being at work is influenced by an individual's mental and physical health, job security, work life benefits, and wages. Page and Vella-Brodrick (2009) further claim that employee well-being consists of subjective well-being (one's own perception of their life satisfaction) (Russell, 2008), workplace well-being (job satisfaction and work-related affect), and psychological well-being (self-esteem, autonomy, spirituality). Furthermore, work-related well-being could be considered as the situation where an employee is satisfied with their job, and when they experience positive emotions (such as joy) more often than negative ones (such as sadness, anger, etc.) (Rodríguez-Muñoz & Sanz-Vergel, 2013). From the above-presented literature, it can be identified that well-being at work takes a subjective stance on how an individual truly feels about their work. Thus, well-being goes beyond one's state of health, and it further reflects one's satisfaction with their work and personal life (Schulte & Vainio, 2010).

2.3. Applying Self-Determination Theory to models' work well-being

To provide a theoretical understanding of what well-being at work is in the context of fashion models, Self-Determination theory (SDT) can be used. SDT has been defined as a "macro-theory of human motivation, personality development and well-being." (Ryan, 2009) The theory discusses that humans have a set of basic and universal psychological needs that are necessary to fulfill for healthy human functioning. Thus, SDT discusses that 'healthy human functioning' is not solely based on happiness, but

rather on individuals being able to achieve psychological growth and development. Ryan and Deci (2002), as interpreted from Meyer et al. (2007), have argued that SDT can be used to build a comprehensive model of well-being, due to its focus on identifying the basic psychological needs of a person. SDT differs from the above-mentioned literature in small detail, as it theorizes that engagement and motivation can be analyzed through just three psychological needs.

2.3.1. Defining Self-Determination Theory

The three psychological needs that analyze and support an individual's well-being are competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2002; Meyer et al., 2007; Vallerand et al., 2008; Ryan, 2009). Competence is described as succeeding in challenging tasks and attaining wanted outcomes. Relatedness consists of establishing relationships and having mutual respect for others. Finally, autonomy relates to having the power to control one's own actions (Baard et al., 2004). These three are considered necessary for healthy human functioning (Ryan, 2009). Thus, SDT provides a framework for describing well-being through humane psychological needs. Bucher (2013) discusses that there are key tools in reaching each component of SDT. To reach autonomy, one must have minimal external pressure and have a provision of maximum choice. To reach competence, one must have the optimal amount of challenge, appropriate demands, and attain relevant feedback. Finally, to reach relatedness, one must convey warmth, involvement, and convey belongingness.

Like most theories, SDT has acquired some critique. Ryan (2009) recognizes that the cross-cultural generalizability of the theory may not allow the theory to apply to every scenario. The theory claims that no matter what background, a person's mental health is greater when one has autonomy over their own behavior (Ryan, 2009). Van den Broeck et al. (2016) argue that the main issue with SDT is that using only three psychological needs to describe well-being often makes it easier to predict positive outcomes rather than negative ones. Therefore, the theory may be limited in balancing both positive and negative aspects of well-being. Although Van den Broeck et al. (2016) critically begin their review of SDT and offer some critique, their findings support that SDT is in fact, a viable framework for explaining well-being. Therefore, it

should be examined whether SDT could apply to explaining the work well-being of fashion models.

2.3.2. Self-Determination Theory applied to fashion models

Meyer et al. (2007) found that by using SDT, models scored lower on well-being than non-models, because their needs are less satisfied, and they concluded some of the following points to describe why. Since models are valued for their physical attributes rather than for being able to perform difficult tasks (Mears, 2008; Mears, 2010), models can lack in competence. Moreover, models often travel (Wissinger, 2009), and are competing against their fellow models, thus they may have a hard time forming relationships, therefore lacking in relatedness. In addition, since models are effectively unemployed, they may struggle in developing deeper connections. Furthermore, models often must conform to the needs of their clients and agents (Zancu & Enea, 2017), and they lack autonomy regarding their agency (e.g., Rodgers et al., 2017; Fortune Super et al., 2021), which can conclude that models lack in autonomy.

Therefore, if SDT is used to assess the well-being of models, it could be argued that models' well-being is limited. The findings made by Meyer et al. (2007) were from two studies covering psychological needs in models and non-models; however, the descriptions as to why models have limited well-being using SDT were mainly plausible reasons, and not qualitatively researched. Therefore, the findings of Meyer et al. (2007) are not competent enough to fully examine the well-being of models. Thus, further aspects need to be considered to achieve a coherent understanding of models' well-being. To clarify whether SDT is a viable framework for analyzing well-being, it will be brought up in further parts of the literature review and discussion section.

2.4. Drive for thinness and its impact on models' work well-being

To further understand what may limit a model's well-being, I will begin by examining the industry's pressures on models. The most criticized factor of the modeling industry is how thin the fashion models are (Mears, 2010), which by itself could be a sign of

lower physical well-being. Thus, this section will focus on how the pressures of the modeling industry can impact a model's self-image.

2.4.1. High internalized thin ideal: pressures from the industry

The “thin ideal” refers to the ‘aesthetics’ of a thin female body (Mears, 2010), which models try to achieve to have “the perfect body” (Swami & Szmigielska, 2013; Record & Austin, 2016). Models have been discovered to show signs of high internalized thin ideal (Fortune Super et al., 2021), in other words, models have a high drive for thinness, which is explained by the industry requiring extreme thinness from its models (Treasure et al., 2008). By conforming to the industry’s wants and needs, models lack control of their work, thus lacking in autonomy, which was found to be an important psychological need (Ryan & Deci, 2002; Meyer et al., 2007; Ryan, 2009). This would suggest that models’ psychological needs are less satisfied and that they do not exercise control over their work (Eatough & Spector, 2014) which can limit a model’s psychological and employee well-being (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009).

To explain the thinness of models, it has been theorized that models have a specific body type (Zancu & Enea, 2017). Moreover, it has also been stated that models are naturally thin (Rodgers et al., 2017), thus the thinness of models cannot always be blamed on the industry. Zancu and Enea (2017) argue that models must have a thin and tall body, as it best highlights designers’ garments, and not because the modeling industry is trying to promote a thin ideal. In addition, Record and Austin (2016: 205) further argue that designs are created to rather hang on the body of a fashion model, rather than sticking to any body part; “The less mass within the outfit, the better the display”. Therefore, previous studies (Zancu & Enea, 2017; Record & Austin, 2016) argue that models are not pressured to be thin because the industry is trying to promote a thin ideal, but rather because the fashionable pieces will fall in a more aesthetically pleasing manner.

Although Zancu and Enea (2017) and Record and Austin (2016) offer reasonable claims, the number of studies that cover the modeling industry’s pressures on fashion models to remain thin makes one believe that models are intensely pressured to

remain thin, or become even thinner (e.g., Preti et al., 2008; Treasure et al., 2008; Rodgers et al., 2017; Fortune Super et al., 2021). Therefore, the reasons offered by Zancu and Enea (2017) and Record and Austin (2016) are overpowered by other existing literature.

Carr and Mercer (2017) state that being in the occupation of a fashion model can influence an individual's self-perception, self-confidence, and maturity. Because models are under the pressure to be thin, they may gain negative associations with their bodies (Fortune Super et al, 2021) and conform to unhealthy coping habits (such as eating disorder habits) (e.g., Preti et al., 2008; Record & Austin, 2016; Di Corrado et al., 2021; Fortune Super et al., 2021). Since it was found that lower mental health can adversely lead to unhealthy lifestyle practices such as poor nutrition, it could be argued that models' mental health, as well as physical health, can be hindered because of the pressures of the industry. Furthermore, if models consistently need to change their appearance, they may have a negative self-image, which in turn can explain conforming to unhealthy coping habits (Prince et al., 2007). Additionally, models' well-being may be hindered since self-acceptance plays a role in employee well-being (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). Another perspective this could be analyzed from is SDT. Following Bucher (2013) ideas on maximizing autonomy, an individual should have minimal external pressures, which seems to be limited for fashion models. Therefore, if using SDT, models' well-being may be further limited by the pressures the industry conveys.

2.4.2. Efforts to combat the thinness of models

To combat previously known "ideal female bodies", the recent body positivity movement has brought a lot of light to accepting bodies of all shapes, colors, and appearances. The movement has had an impactful remark on e.g., social media, where several influencers who promote body positivity have gained a larger following (Cherry, 2020). Moreover, as an example, Ashley Graham, a plus-size model, has advocated for not having her photos retouched, and she is known for praising body positivity (Schild, 2020), which has allowed some brands to promote a larger diversity of models. However, the novelty of the movement means it has only recently gained

momentum, which is why the thinness of models continues to be a relevant discussion to this day.

On the more legal side, France passed a law in 2017 that requires models to acquire health certificates before walking on the runway. It was found that the models who planned to go to Fashion Week had a health certificate (Rodgers et al., 2020); however, peculiarly, Fortune Super et al. (2021) found that some agencies in Paris forge the health certificates that the law requires. This raises the question of whether the certificates are forged because agencies need thin models, or because fashion models are so deeply stuck on the ideal thin body composition that they refuse to become anything else.

France passed another law requiring models to have a BMI (Body Mass Index) of at least 18 since several models have been found to have a BMI less than 18.5 (Preti et al., 2008; Rodgers et al., 2017; Fortune Super et al., 2021), which indicates being underweight (Pi-Sunyer, 2002). BMI is a measure of body fat percentage using height and weight, in which scales exist to determine whether an individual is underweight or overweight. However, it has been argued that BMI is a highly inaccurate measure of body fat, as it does not take muscle mass, bone density, or overall body composition into account (Nordqvist, 2022). Therefore, BMI may not be an accurate representation of measuring physical health (Santonastaso et al., 2002; Zancu & Enea, 2017), and thus it is not an accurate indication of lower physical well-being. However, being categorized as underweight (and being pressured to maintain this weight) can still hinder a model's physical and subjective well-being even further. In addition to already suffering from attaining physical well-being (Schulte & Vainio, 2010), models may experience extreme fatigue, binge eat, and have mood swings (Clements, 2013). Thus, Rodgers et al. (2017) discussed that the modeling industry should, nonetheless, adopt the widespread use of a minimum BMI.

Surprisingly, Rodgers et al. (2017) hypothesis for setting a minimum BMI was quickly turned down by models themselves albeit the pressures from the modeling industry. Because of models' high internalized thin ideal (Rodgers et al., 2017; Fortune Super et al., 2021), implementing a minimum BMI seems contradictory to them (especially for the naturally thin models). Models seemed more interested in policies that would

improve their work conditions, e.g., employment protections and healthier working conditions (Rodgers et al., 2017). Moreover, a minimum BMI could make the modeling industry even more competitive. An additional physical requirement could further harm a model's well-being, as they are already conforming to fit the model archetype. Considering the attempts to promote models' well-being, it can be argued that models continue to be mistreated.

2.5. Handling rejection in a competitive industry

This section will cover how the competitiveness of the modeling industry leads models to deal with rejection. Thus, the section also covers how models handle rejection, and how they seek for work. In addition, I will discuss how facing rejection leads models to be underemployed, and thus face further financial difficulties.

2.5.1. Managing competition

In addition to struggling with body image, models' job security is further limited by the competitive nature of the modeling industry. Becoming a fashion model does not require training or education which in turn creates low entry criterion into the industry. This "easy" entry results in oversupply, as too many models are chasing the same selected few jobs (Mears & Finlay, 2005; Mears, 2010; Rodgers et al., 2020). Models acknowledge that if they differ from the physical requirements or fail to offer something 'more' than their peers (Rodgers et al., 2017), they will have difficulty finding work (Mears & Finlay, 2005). In terms of SDT, models may be under the potential threat of lacking in 'competence', as if they are not able to attain work, it may be difficult to succeed in challenging tasks. However, if models do acquire specific jobs they have worked for, it may be plausible that models can in fact approach competence, as they will feel successful when completing challenging tasks, that is, acquiring work (Baard et al., 2004).

Models must stand out from their competitors to succeed, which is done by having a strong presence both in and out of work. Models do this by branding themselves as a desirable object, which includes practicing aesthetic labor (Wissinger, 2009). Aesthetic

labor involves selling the appearance of the product which in this case includes selling the physical aspects of a model (Mears, 2014), which is controlled by dieting, working out regularly, etc. This process is managed “98 percent by the manager and 2 percent by the model” (Wissinger, 2009). Moreover, models must manage their aesthetic labor differently for each client they work for (Wissinger, 2012), e.g., by wearing specific clothes, or by having a distinct hairstyle. This aspect is significant when considering SDT, as models will potentially lack autonomy. More specifically, models seem to lack control over their work, as well as their careers because they are conscious that their looks may fade, as beauty and looks are subjective. Since the demand for specific looks may change over time (Mears & Finlay, 2005), this may prompt doubts that models face over their occupation as they may realize how little control they have over their occupation. Moreover, since agencies control much of a model’s look, as well as the development of their career (Wissinger, 2009; Rodgers et al., 2017), this poses further challenges to fulfilling autonomy.

Cartwright and Cooper (1993) argue that job insecurity, as well as career development, are sources of occupational stress. This applies to fashion models since they can never be sure if they will be hired by a client, as the oversupply of models in the industry minimizes the chances of developing a “supermodel” career (Mears, 2008; Wissinger, 2009). Linn et al. (1985) also argue that unemployment harms psychological functioning, as unemployed people may be more anxious and/or depressed than those who are employed. Although models are not ‘unemployed’, they have difficulty in knowing when they will find work, which could induce similar feelings amongst those who are permanently unemployed. Therefore, the uncertainty of work hinders a model’s psychological well-being.

Moreover, Harter et al. (2003) claim that either too much or too little challenge in the workplace can hinder well-being. This is quite ironic in the case of the modeling industry, as it seems there is both too much and too little challenge for fashion models. The intense competition (Wissinger, 2009) and drive for thinness (e.g., Pinto et al., 2020; Fortune Super et al., 2021) can create too much challenge, whereas the easy entry (Mears & Finlay, 2005; Mears, 2010; Rodgers et al., 2020) can create too little challenge. In terms of SDT, competence is vital for fashion models to fulfill all criteria of well-being (Baard et al., 2004). Since competence involves succeeding in

challenging tasks, models may in turn fulfill competence when they are e.g., hired for jobs that many models seek. Despite this, Bucher (2013) outlines that to support competence one must have the optimal amount of challenge. This may be limited for fashion models, as there seems to exist an inherent imbalance of challenge. Thus, implementing SDT in this case to explain the well-being of fashion models seems slightly contradictory, which further supports the critique emphasized by Van den Broeck et al. (2016). Despite this, it could be argued that a model's well-being can be hindered due to the imbalance of challenges as outlined by Harter et al. (2003).

2.5.2. Facing rejection

During the process of models seeking work through go-sees or castings, models face limitless rejection from clients that turn them down. A go-see involves a variety of models meeting a client, such as department stores, fashion designers, or studios that shoot various catalogues. A casting is a more formal appointment where particular models have been selected to meet a client. Castings, therefore, offer stronger chances of being hired, as the models have already been "pre-selected" (Mears & Finlay, 2005). However, the abundance of models seeking for similar jobs means that ultimately, every model will face rejection more often than acceptance (Mears & Finlay, 2005; Fortune Super et al., 2021). Facing rejection has led studies to say fashion models are a high-risk group for depression and anxiety (Fortune Super et al., 2021), which is not surprising considering the abundance of studies claiming models' lower well-being (e.g., Meyer et al., 2007; Pinto et al., 2020; Fortune Super et al., 2021).

Fortune Super et al. (2021) claim that modeling agents give models little support in handling rejection. Models must face and handle rejection by themselves, and they learn how to cope with the help of other models. The lack of guidance from agents can create unnecessary stress, a decrease in self-confidence, as well as feelings of isolation. This inherently affects a model's psychological well-being (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). Moreover, Schulte and Vainio (2010) discussed that the absence of work or underemployment can cause major stress and ill health. The constant pressure to remain in a certain shape and still be rejected may turn models into gaining other unhealthy habits, such as drug and alcohol abuse (Santonastaso et al., 2002).

Resorting to substance abuse could be a result of associating more negative than positive emotions associated with one's work (Vreeland, 2007; Rodríguez-Muñoz & Sanz-Vergel, 2013). Since models face extensive rejection, they may lack the conveyance of belongingness in their occupation, which suggests a limitation to fulfilling relatedness (Bucher, 2013). Moreover, since models lack guidance from their agencies (Fortune Super et al., 2021), models may lack clarity on what is required from them, which suggests a limitation to fulfilling competence (Bucher, 2013). Therefore, in terms of SDT, models' well-being may be hindered as they lack clarity on what is demanded from them, and they may potentially feel a lack of belongingness in their occupation since they face consistent rejection.

Moreover, all parties in the fashion industry (clients, agents, designers, etc.) feel entitled to comment on model's bodies as if there was nothing further to them (Mears & Finlay, 2005), which can turn models to take the industry's demands too far, as some models have even died a few hours after walking on the runway (some from eating disorders) (Record & Austin, 2016). Thus, the modeling industry implements some detrimental work hazards to its "employees" (Mears, 2008), whom the industry, in their operations-driven view, fails to protect. Danna and Griffin (1999) claim that 85% of all workplace injuries can be avoided with employee training, which the modeling industry lacks (Mears, 2010). Models claimed that visiting the agency gave them heightened anxiety (Fortuner Super et al., 2021), which could be due to the lack of support and fear of negative comments.

2.5.3. Handling the rejection

To handle rejection, a model must not take the rejection personally (Mears & Finlay, 2005), as it may discourage them. However, rejection is very personal (Deschene, 2015), and can further harm a model's subjective, mental, and physical well-being (Danna & Griffin, 1999). Mears and Finlay (2005) state that models try to recognize that it is not them – as a person – that is being rejected, but rather *just* their physical appearance. However, this rejection can harm a model's self-esteem, and their values for the importance of their work, which in turn can further harm their psychological well-being, as outlined by Page and Vella-Brodrick (2009). This directly links to how in

pursuance of relatedness, one must feel belongingness (Bucher, 2013). Therefore, rejection may further hinder models from attaining well-being at work when considering SDT.

To cope with rejection, Mears and Finlay (2005) argue that models can be said to practice emotional labor; however, this can be a bit speculative. The authors recognize that Hochschild (1983) states emotional labor to be able to manage one's own feelings to create a desired state of mind in a (potential) customer. Since models are independent contractors (e.g., Rodgers et al., 2017; Pinto et al., 2020; Fortune Super et al., 2021) they cannot practice emotional labor to their employers. Furthermore, models do not directly interact with customers (Wissinger, 2009). However, since models are appreciated for their physical appearance (e.g., Mears, 2010; Record & Austin, 2016), models manage their own feelings to create the desired appearance for those viewing them. Therefore, emotional labor is a self-protection mechanism that models use to cope with the more unpleasant parts of their work (Mears & Finlay, 2005).

However, using emotional labor as a self-protection mechanism may have a higher cost for a model's self-identity. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) claim that emotional labor can trigger emotive dissonance and hinder a person's sense of self. Moreover, Hoschild (1983) and Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) argue that employees simulate emotions through acting – that is, acting emotions that are not felt. Mears and Finlay (2005) further claimed that models do in fact act throughout much of their career, to become more marketable. Therefore, not only is emotional labor a self-protection mechanism, but also a source of increasing one's market value. However, drawing from the points made, models may lose touch with their identity if they resort to (too much) emotional labor.

2.5.4. Financial insecurities

The underemployment resulting from rejection can lead to further financial insecurities models face. Danna and Griffin (1999) and Schulte and Vainio (2010) have similarly outlined that occupational characteristics, such as income, job security, work-life

benefits, and wages, impact well-being. This can be applied to models' employment statuses as independent contractors. Fashion models thus seem to be limited in maximizing their work-related satisfactions, such as satisfaction with one's income (Danna & Griffin, 1999). In addition, it may take months for models to receive payments, as payment schedules are not regulated (Fortune Super et al., 2021).

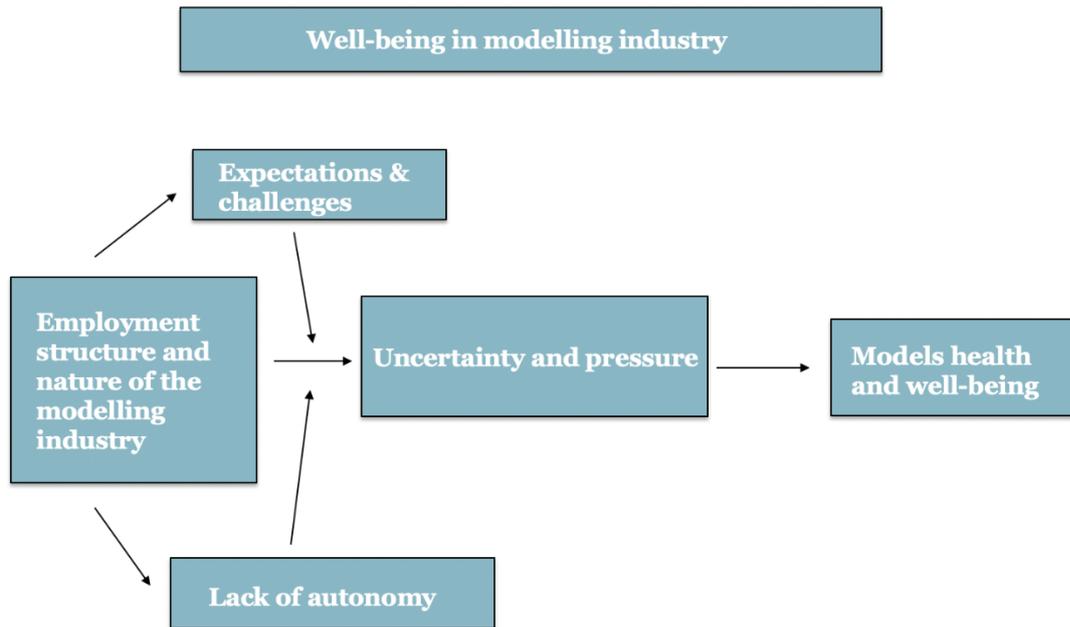
During COVID-19, job uncertainty and financial distress have been at their highest for fashion models (Pinto et al., 2020). In a study of 212 fashion models, Pinto et al. (2020) found that 20% of models cannot cover the cost of basic needs and 68% were concerned about paying for housing. Moreover, 55% of models said they were currently owed money by clients, and only a few were receiving paid sick leave or unemployment benefits (Pinto et al., 2020). Thus, the lack of work-life benefits, wages, as well as decreased job security leaves models in despair over being able to even cover the cost of basic needs (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Schulte & Vainio, 2010; Pinto et al., 2020). Moreover, Fortune Super et al. (2021) concluded that financial uncertainty was one of the key triggers of anxiety for fashion models through semi-structured interviews. Models have frequently raised issues such as wage theft as well as late payments, leading them to additional financial distress (Ziff, 2016; Pinto et al., 2020). Therefore, not only does models employment status hinder their work-related satisfactions, but it may further harm their mental health, as they may gain feelings of anxiety considering their next, and not always promised, paycheck.

2.6. Conceptual Framework

To attempt in answering research objective 1¹ and 3², a conceptual framework (Figure 1, see the following page) has been developed upon the findings of the literature review. Albeit SDT has been discovered to be applicable to explaining specific phenomenon affecting models' well-being, there are limitations to using solely SDT. Therefore, parts of SDT have been implemented within this framework to counterbalance discussing all valid parts in as much detail as possible.

¹ To identify the work environment of fashion models.

² To examine the aspects that may potentially hinder fashion models work well-being.



"Figure 1 The factors affecting the work well-being of fashion models"

This conceptual framework draws on the literature presented above, hence it is based on the uncertainties and pressure of the modeling industry being the biggest factor in affecting well-being. This framework can generally apply to explaining the connection between being a fashion model and their well-being, as it includes the main concepts explained in this literature review. In the next paragraphs, I will briefly explain the components belonging to each attribute of the framework.

The *Employment structure and nature of the modeling industry* explain how a model's role as an independent contractor can limit the following: wages, job security, employee benefits, paid sick leave, etc. Moreover, this component discusses how models inherently lack control in their work. Thus, the *employment structure* leads models to face intense *expectations and challenges*, as well as how they must cope with *lack of autonomy*. *Expectations & challenges* cover what is expected of models: their likability, their thinness, being available on any given day for a casting, and being expected to be able to handle rejection. Overall, this induces challenges to being in the occupation of a fashion model. This ultimately includes 'competence' (SDT) within it. *Lack of autonomy* similarly covers how models are immensely controlled by their agencies, as they lack control in the development of their own careers.

By combining the previously mentioned aspects, models ultimately face *uncertainty and pressure* regarding their occupation. However, *uncertainty and pressure* go beyond the employment structure, as it further analyzes how models feel about the aspects of their job. This part covers how models have *uncertainty* over e.g., their wages, their job security, and when and if they will be hired due to the competition. Moreover, the uncertainties may further reflect negatively on relatedness (SDT), as models may lack belongingness in their occupation. *Pressure* covers e.g., the pressure to be thin, to be liked by clients (models do this by practicing emotional labor), and pressure to conform to clients' and agents' needs over one's own. Therefore, since *uncertainty and pressure* consider a model's subjective point of view on their job, it is the central part of the framework. Ultimately, it is how the model views the *uncertainties and pressures* of the industry to determine a *model's health and well-being*.

2.7. Summary of literature review

The literature review attempted to answer research objective 1, which is "To identify the work environment of fashion models", as well as research objective 3, which is "To examine the aspects that may potentially hinder fashion models' work well-being". The concepts relevant to the analysis of fashion models' well-being at work have been explored. It has inherently been found that the nature of the modeling industry can hinder a fashion model's well-being. To understand how exactly models perceive their well-being in the modeling industry, further research must be conducted. The following section will describe how research for this thesis has been conducted to understand the phenomenon in discussion.

3. METHODOLOGY

Albeit the secondary data presented in the literature review is of high importance in analyzing the findings presented in section 4, the gathering of primary data is essential to answer research objective 2, which is “To examine fashion models’ subjective perception of well-being at work”. A qualitative approach was selected for this study to generate data that is focused on exploring experiences and feelings, rather than statistical data.

3.1. Research methods

The primary data for this thesis was generated through semi-structured interviews. Carr and Mercer (2017) outline that using a semi-structured approach can provide deep, detailed data, which is of importance for this thesis. Moreover, most questions were open-ended, giving the participant the freedom to elaborate on what they consider most important to them and to avoid the interview being only led by the interviewer (Carr & Mercer, 2017).

Furthermore, Elmir et al. (2011) have outlined that in-depth, semi-structured interviews are best suited for researching sensitive topics, which are typically outlined to be phenomena that are private, potentially stressful, sacred, and may induce an emotional response (McCosker et al., 2001), which ultimately seems like a suitable description for personal well-being. Moreover, Bryman & Bell (2018) highlight that qualitative research is valuable for emotionalism, which is concerned with subjectivity and gaining “insider” access to specific experiences. Since the research objective aims to investigate models’ own perception of their well-being, attaining emotionalism can aid in the reader understanding models’ true perceptions of their occupation and their subjective well-being.

3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

For this thesis, I decided to interview fashion models through semi-structured interviews. All interview participants went through a brief screening process before

being interviewed. Firstly, the model had to have had at least 2 years of experience in modeling to increase the value of the findings (in terms of experience within the industry). Second, the model must have had been booked with a modeling agency, rather than working solely on a gig basis. This is because many of the factors affecting models' well-being are connected to pressures and uncertainty deriving from their work structure, which is why it is important to assess the relationship models have with their 'employers', that is, agencies. Finally, the participants had to have varied years of experience (2+) in their occupation, to determine whether experience has any connection to work well-being. The interviewee profiles are presented in the table (Table 1) below.

No.	Name*	Age	Currently a model	Experience as a model (in years)
1	Maddie	22	No	9
2	Ava	23	Part-time	7
3	Sofia	30	Yes	11
4	Nadia	23	No	3
5	Jennifer	32	Yes	12
6	Nina	22	Part-time	6
7	Diana	19	Part-time	5
8	Avery	30	Yes	9
9	Claire	25	Yes	6
10	Ashley	28	Yes	12
11	Isabelle	31	Yes	11
12	Lily	25	No	7

*"Table 1 Interviewee profiles, *names provided in this thesis are pseudonyms to protect the identity of interviewees"*

Due to the higher prevalence of female fashion models in the modeling industry (Mears & Finlay, 2005), as well as modeling being one of the only occupations where female models routinely make more money than male models (Wolf, 1991), the participants selected were all female. Moreover, due to the discussion in the literature review considering modeling being a short-lived occupation, a few ex-models were selected to examine why specific models had left the industry.

Before arranging the interviews, the models were informed that they could choose to be in a study concerning the work well-being of fashion models. Moreover, it was noted that their contribution is completely anonymous, as the topic covered in this thesis is one of sensitive nature. Participants were not given financial compensation for their input. No further details of the interviewees will be provided to ensure their anonymity.

Nine potential interviewees were contacted via Instagram, and four further interviewees were recommended by other interviewees. Eight interviewees agreed to the interview, and the four recommended participants all agreed to partake in the study. In total, 12 interviews were conducted. 11 interviews were held on Zoom, and one respondent wished to respond via email. Elmir et al. (2011) highlight in their study that albeit face-to-face interviews aid in gaining information that cannot be obtained through different methods (such as questionnaires), there are still other viable methods in collecting data on sensitive topics, such as computer-mediated communication.

The computer-mediated communication used in this thesis was a videoconferencing platform (Zoom) and email. There were multiple benefits of using computer-mediated communication for the research: 1) To mitigate the risk of either the interviewer or interviewee from contracting COVID-19, 2) To save time and money on travel, 3) To ensure that the interviewee can talk about their personal information in a safe environment without any distractions. Moreover, some of the models are currently in international locations, making some of the interviews even impossible to conduct face-to-face. Since the participants of this study have experience in working internationally, the reach of this study goes beyond a limited geographical area. The interview design is visible in the appendices.

The interviews were held both in Finnish and in English to enable participants to speak in their preferred language, as previous research like the one of Elmir et al. (2011) claims that this makes participants more comfortable. The interviews began with rapport-building, that is developing mutual trust and affinity. Since the researcher was familiar with most interview participants, rapport-building was quite easy, and potentially more comfortable for the interviewees themselves as well. The interviews

ranged from 25 and 50 minutes, with the average interview taking around 35 minutes. The interviews were recorded on Zoom. The interviewees were informed of the interview being recorded to transcribe the interviews, and their consent was given to do so. Moreover, most models included in this study emphasized how important this topic is, which potentially gives this research more value.

3.3. Data Analysis

After the completion of the interviews, the interviews were transcribed onto a separate Microsoft Word document by the researcher. To refrain from misunderstandings concerning translations (e.g., Finnish to English), all interviews were analyzed in the language of the interview. The analysis of data was done by combining both thematic and narrative analysis, which will be explained in more depth in the following section. As outlined by Shukla et al. (2014), combining thematic as well as narrative approaches can have multiple benefits. The authors state that a thematic analysis enables providing a broad overview of the entire data, whereas narrative analysis allows for an extended focus on particularities. Thus, by combining the two methods of analysis a thematically broad yet detailed analysis can be created of how fashion models describe their well-being.

3.3.1. Thematic and Narrative Analysis

In terms of thematic analysis, the work of Braun and Clarke (2006) provides the most popular outline for thematic analysis, which entails a step-by-step guide: 1) familiarizing yourself with data, 2) initial coding, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing the themes, 5) defining and naming the themes, and 6) report writing. All of these steps were followed in the initial process of finding similarities as well as 'abnormalities' from interview data. Thus, the thematic analysis aims to present themes across the entire sample, whereas the narrative analysis will present individual cases to understand the particularities (Shukla et al., 2014) of analyzing the well-being of fashion models. Therefore, the structure of analyzing data was done by categorizing the data into larger themes and then conducting narrative analysis under these themes to understand how models truly perceive their work well-being in the industry.

By following the steps of Braun and Clarke (2006), five significant themes were recognized inductively. The themes were gathered after the interview data had been closely analyzed. The themes were based upon them being a common phenomenon with fashion models, surprising, or if models explicitly stated it being important. The themes recognized are the following:

1. Uncertain work environment
2. Lack of guidance
3. Power dynamics
4. Challenging work
5. Changes in body image
6. Changing traditions & promoting well-being

As for narrative analysis, it has been outlined that individuals can tell stories, express identity, relationships, as well as emotions through communication. Narrative analysis does not have a clear methodology; however, it enables interviewee stories to be interpreted with more meaning. Although narrative analysis has a micro-focus on language and grammar, given that there remains to exist a clear and defined methodology to conduct narrative analysis (Priest et al., 2002), the data will be analyzed more so in terms of feelings, and with a partial focus on the language used by the interviewees. In other words, narrative analysis will be used to recognize deeper meanings to why a participant said what they said. This will provide more insight into understanding models' well-being. The narrative analysis of the themes will be presented in section 4.

3.4. Ethical Considerations and Limitations of Methodology

Like most research methods, the chosen method may have some limitations, as well as ethical considerations that need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, the main ethical consideration is to provide anonymity to the participants of this research (Arifin, 2018). As the questions aim to explore sensitive and confidential matters, it is important for the subjects of the study to feel comfortable in expressing themselves without the fear of their identity being revealed. I, as the author and researcher of this

study, am the only person to know who the participants of this study are and the only person who has seen any raw or unedited material.

Since this research investigates a sensitive topic, some participants may ultimately feel that they are under “inspection”, which may limit the extent to which interviewees share their thoughts (Elmir et al., 2011). To minimize the power imbalance of the interviewer vs. interviewee, rapport building enabled to establish mutual trust. This potentially aided interviewees in considering the interview as rather a discussion than an interview solely used for research purposes. Another limitation is that the interviewer must respond to the needs of the interviewee so that the interviewee feels more comfortable (Elmir et al., 2011). Since I, as the researcher have been a model, it was easy for me to understand specific instances the interviewees discussed. However, researcher self-disclosure may be an issue for this research, and further, the research was only conducted and analyzed by one researcher. However, self-disclosure may have aided in interviewees feeling more comfortable about sharing their experiences, as they may feel less lonely with their thoughts. This research may have potentially aided models in understanding specific aspects of their occupation.

Moreover, a further issue is that this thesis only studies the well-being of female fashion models, who are predominantly based in Europe. However, considering that most models have worked internationally, the results of the study can apply to many geographical locations. Considering this fact, further research needs to be made that does not interfere with previous ideas or opinions that the researcher has for the study. This being said, I recognize that if this study were to be replicated by another author, the findings might deviate from those I have generated.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section will discuss the results of the data. Each theme stated previously will be discussed in its own section, and the themes will be analyzed by using narrative analysis. The table (Table 2) below summarizes the key components as well as provides two example quotations for each theme.

Theme	Description	Example narrative 1	Example narrative 2	No. of participants who highlight the theme (out of 12)
1. Uncertain work environment	Models faced uncertainty concerning late or non-existent paychecks, job descriptions, work schedules, and finding work, as they have to deal with rejection.	<i>"[...] the like uncertainty in a nutshell was like maybe the factor as to why I ended up quitting modeling. [...] Like overall over work, payments, cause it goes in such an ad hoc style, that are you going to get any work, you're running to castings, there's no security [...] in this kind of work". -Lily</i>	<i>"I've had to wait like wait previously and like for example ask that can you pay me and only then do they pay me. [...] with my foreign agency there's still a part from last summer's paychecks that I'm waiting for. [...] I'm afraid that they're gonna go bankrupt or something and then I won't know what will happen to my money". -Nina</i>	11
2. Lack of guidance	Models do not receive any training before they begin their occupation. They feel almost lost in their occupation, and they claim to be dependent on their agencies to attain proper treatment.	<i>"It's practically non-existent - the amount of preparation that a model who's young and in such a vulnerable age so it's practically a joke that like in any occupation you can be thrown this blindly into the fire". -Isabelle</i>	<i>"If I would go ten years back in time to when I was 19 and I started, what I would have wanted [...] would have been some sort of support group who would help me share my thoughts where I wouldn't feel alone, and someone who's experienced in the industry could tell me that, 'hey, this is what you're going to experience, you're not alone' ". -Sofia</i>	9
3. Power dynamics	The power dynamics of the industry leave models with little control, and thus fear of speaking up. Models must learn how to navigate their occupation through experience.	<i>"Something that could be soothing would be like a booking system, where you could see your future [laughs], so you could see your schedule, and you wouldn't have to always ask your agency and feel like a burden just for asking". -Isabelle</i>	<i>"I had to say something and obviously from that day on he never booked me again. [...] I question just like should I have not said anything and play this stupid game and just ignore it and just be the model". -Jennifer</i>	9
4. Challenging work	Models openly expressed thoughts concerning mental health. All 12 models felt that their work as a model is challenging, and some reflected on feeling extremely rewarded for succeeding in challenging tasks.	<i>"This job is challenging but when your dreams come true [...] it's so rewarding and that's one of the reasons I don't wanna change this job to anything else". -Claire</i>	<i>"Like especially somewhere abroad you're just running around castings and then you don't really get any work or then sometimes you have some job, but most of the time you're just there for no reason [...] and that's mentally draining, cause you're just like 'well what do I have to do better so that I can find work' ". -Ava</i>	8
5. Changes in body image	Many models discussed changes in their body image. Some discussed feeling a heightened self-confidence, whereas some expressed having felt pressure to lose weight.	<i>"Everything changed when I became a model because I realized that this edgy weird skinny look can be beautiful". -Sofia</i>	<i>"I know that if I wouldn't've started so young, I would be very happy with my body". -Diana</i>	7
6. Changing traditions & promoting well-being	Multiple models had ideas of how well-being could and should be promoted in the industry. To attain these goals, some traditions of the modeling industry would have to change.	<i>"Agencies should treat models as equals, cause I feel like there's a lot [...] of social issues with like how employees are treated just because they're 'models' ". -Lily</i>	<i>"The number one thing would be mental coaching [...] we're not just models, we're people, [...] which also means we need extensive preparation. [...] the lack of autonomy for me has been very hard, and it has everything to do with not being told anything, and it feels so draining and annoying and makes me furious because I'm not in charge". - Sofia</i>	11

"Table 2 Descriptions of themes with example narratives"

4.1. Uncertain work environment

This theme was almost impossible to ignore throughout the entirety of the 92 pages of interview transcriptions. Albeit the only question directing interviewees to discuss uncertainties of modeling was “how often have you felt uncertainty concerning your next paycheck”, the term “uncertainty” was used to explain multiple aspects of modeling. The term was often linked to late or non-existent paychecks, job descriptions, work schedules, finding work, as well as dealing with rejection.

Lily’s quote (see Table 2, Theme 1: example 1) refers to the uncertainty of the modeling industry being the leading factor as to why she quit modeling. Lily uses the term “in a nutshell” to display her reality without offering any extraneous detail. The repetition of “a lot” emphasizes the struggle Lily faced when considering staying in the occupation. It is also interesting to notice her use of “security”, which may suggest feeling out of place or even more so feeling trapped in an uncertain work environment. Therefore, Lily emphasizes how modeling is both an insecure and unstable occupation. Thus, the nature of the modeling industry hinders models’ potential in thriving in their occupation, which ultimately suggests limitations to attaining well-being. When asked “how often do you feel uncertainty concerning your next paycheck”, Diana explained the following:

“I don’t know if I can answer by saying always, but like always, always, I can’t even properly pinpoint a specific time, like literally like always, I’ve never had like a comfortable feeling [...] so that I’d be like sure over it”. -Diana

Diana uses time allocating terms such as “always” and “never” to emphasize how the uncertainties of her occupation lead her to feel insecure over her paycheck. Although most commonly “always” and “never” are terms that are not meant in a literal sense, Diana’s addition of “I’ve never had a comfortable feeling” shows that uncertainty is an important aspect in describing how she feels about her occupation. It could even be interpreted that Diana feels distraught by the way that her agencies and/or clients can “get away” by not paying her. Diana seems to brush off this statement just by accepting it, as she seems to be used to the fact that she doesn’t receive all the money she has

been promised. Therefore, Diana reflects on how the lack of control she has over her work limits her work well-being.

Nina's quote (Table 2: Theme 1: Example 2) shows clear signs of fear and frustration over her unreceived paychecks. Her narrative depicts subtle tones of anger. Having to ask to receive paychecks makes Nina frustrated and angry as she repeats the term "waiting". She expresses that she doesn't know what will happen to her money if e.g., her agency goes bankrupt, but it seems that she's already questioning what happened to the money she was promised. Through Nina's narrative, it could be interpreted that she does not feel looked after in her occupation, therefore suggesting that models' well-being is not a priority. Thus, not only are models struggling to receive monetary compensation for their work, but they also struggle to attain feeling secure within their occupation. On the other hand, Nadia didn't seem to have to question where her money was, as she mainly had to gain 'experience' by doing free photoshoots:

"When you're a starting model you don't get the well-paying jobs cause they go to the more experienced, so it's not a given that you even have work". -Nadia

Albeit Nadia had 3 years of experience in modeling, she still faced uncertainty with finding work, especially work that pays. Nadia seems to feel a bit distraught over this by using the phrase "it's not a given". Surprisingly enough, Nadia felt that she had to gain experience to book the jobs that did offer money, but it is questionable how models should thrive if the jobs automatically go to the more experienced. This highlights how attaining a supermodel career can be challenging, as models like Nadia may feel discouraged by the lack of work they are offered.

Regarding finding work, multiple models felt that facing rejection was a given in their occupation, and they felt it was a part of their jobs that they had accustomed to. Models expressed that when they felt too closely linked to a specific casting or attaining a specific job, the mental toll this would have on them would sometimes be irreversible. Thus, most commonly models stated that they've grown to not take rejections too personally, and just accept that they were not a good fit for the job. However, this meant in some cases that models had to create different coping mechanisms to deal with the more unfortunate rejections. Some expressed that they had to laugh it off and

drink alcohol with friends, and some felt that they had to avoid thinking about attaining castings in general. When explaining how she reacted to clients rejecting her, Lily explained the following:

“A huge amount of them just pass you by and I feel like sometimes it’s a bit too depressing, it’s even useless to go to the casting to show your face if you’re not even what they’re looking for”. -Lily

From Lily’s quote, it is understood that it is not necessarily the rejection that makes her feel frustrated or “depressed”, but rather the fact that she is wasting her time going to castings to seek jobs where her look is not even being considered. This shows how the modeling industry is fixated on holding these castings as a formality to potentially make models feel like they are busy and demanded by the market. This could be for models to feel less discouraged. If models see an empty schedule, or they feel undermined by their look not being desired by a client, they may feel heightened discouragement. Lily uses the term “useless” to describe how more often than not it seems even wasteful to try and attain work. This suggests that the occupation may cause frustration, as models are not even often sought out for their qualifications or experience, but rather only their physical appearance. However, this differs from Nadia’s previous comment. Thus, it may be that after all models may be chosen primarily due to their physical appearance, and secondly for their experience within the industry.

Sofia seemed to express similar frustration over the uncertainty of being in the occupation of a fashion model; however, what Sofia highlights is that the vagueness of the entire job description is what has induced feelings of uncertainty in her:

“[...] And the uncertainty is a result of – I never had information, I didn’t understand, no one told me [...] so it was a little bit like will I ever earn anything from this”. -Sofia

The above statement refers to when Sofia started modeling, and that the first work she was provided didn’t pay her. Sofia expresses frustration with not having received a clear job description from her agency as to how being in the occupation of a fashion model works. “I never had information” and, “No one told me” depicts how Sofia felt

alone in trying to manage her way through the occupation. It seems almost contradictory that most models stated being dependent on their agents and/or agencies, but still felt that they didn't receive clear enough information from them on how to succeed and navigate being a model. Sofia's narrative suggests a more complex question. If models do not even understand their occupation, how are they supposed to manage their own well-being at work?

This theme discussed how models perceive their work environment as unstable and insecure. Moreover, models felt that factors such as seeking work or not receiving paychecks played a hindering factor in pursuing work well-being.

4.2. Lack of guidance

The previous theme discussed how models face uncertainty in their occupation, and it was discovered through Sofia's quote that she feels like she had a lack of guidance to navigate her occupation. Interestingly enough, Sofia was not the only model to express this issue. Multiple models mentioned that they are dependent on their agencies to give them information. However, it was discovered through data that models are often left to figure out the nuances of the modeling world alone, as they lack clarity on their job descriptions. To feel less alone, models claimed that friendships and support groups were of vital importance. An interesting relationship was discovered between models' well-being and their relationship with their agents: the better the relationship that a model has with her agent, the more she felt "lucky" for receiving humane treatment.

There seems to exist a pattern in how models do not receive any guidance. Isabelle's quote (see Table 2, Theme 2: example 1) clearly shows that the lack of training before being sent out into the world of modeling feels like being thrown into flames. The usage of "blindly into the fire" suggests that a starting model, in reality, may have no knowledge of what the occupation truly consists of, and thus the fire depicts models being sent alone to figure out the occupation by themselves. This issue was evident through multiple interviews. Many models felt that they had questions unanswered and felt that it was up to them to learn how to navigate their occupation through experience.

As a result of this, many models felt that they were alone with their struggles. Therefore, it isn't surprising to see how most models reiterated how important it was for them to have a support group to feel less lonely.

Sofia's quote (see table 2, Theme 2: example 2) shows how models may find it difficult to manage loneliness without a support group. She explains having needed help in preparation for what she was going to face in the occupation. This further highlights the lack of guidance models receive, which in turn explains why models feel alone. Albeit Sofia discusses having "wanted" a support group, it seems that Sofia's desire for more knowledge seems more of a "what I would have needed". However, Sofia may have expressed this more as a "want" as she has learned how to solely navigate her occupation despite the lack of guidance.

Arguably, support groups often offer individuals comfort in any industry. However, since models feel like they've been thrown to face the world alone, the only thing that seems to help them cope with the more unpleasant factors is a support group. When asked whether it was easy for models to establish deeper relationships with other models despite the competitiveness of the industry, almost every model stated that this was their key factor in being able to navigate the occupation. When asked to comment on her overall experience in the modeling industry, Isabelle highlighted the following:

"The biggest cherry on top of the cake has been the great friendships I've built during, or that I've been blessed with, I'm so lucky [...] like I feel like a real winner." -Isabelle

Isabelle is not alone in the thought that the friendships she has established have guided her in this occupation. Isabelle refers to the idiom 'cherry on top of the cake' to explicitly refer to her friendships making the occupation an overall worthwhile occupation. She even states feeling "blessed" and like a "winner" for having these friends around her, which could further suggest that building friendships in this industry seems crucial for her to have been able to feel this happy. This depicts how modeling may not always feel rewarding because of the occupation itself, but rather the other aspects that come along with it, such as friends.

In terms of models' dependency on their agencies to gain clarity as well as assistance, there seemed to be two opposite examples of types of agencies. One, which would only care about the money that the models bring into the agency, and the other where some models felt that their well-being was cared for. From most models' comments, it could be argued that most modeling agencies lay in the middle ground between these two opposites; however, considering that there can exist such vast differences in the way that an agency/ agent acts toward models, models may sometimes end up feeling 'lucky' for ending up within an agency that treats them with human decency. The contrasting elements of models' relationships with their agencies are visible in the table (Table 3) below.

Type of relationship with agency	Example narrative 1	Example narrative 2	Example narrative 3	Example narrative 4 (Experience of both)
Supportive	<i>"I've been really lucky with my agents, and I feel like most have [...] respected [me]". – Jennifer</i>	<i>"I was super lucky with [my agent]. Through her I got really good connections [...] and I've been open about my struggles eating". - Maddie</i>	<i>"I trust my agencies to control the work I do in a positive way. That the work I do is curated to suit my image and the moment in my career. By now, after many years of modelling, I'm pleased I've reached a good transparent relationship with my agencies." -Ashley</i>	<i>"My mother agent cares about [my well-being] because he was a model himself. So he understands how the industry is and how it feels like to be a model in this very insecure world and industry. [...] but overall it depends on the agencies. Like I did have agencies who were not really nice and who didn't care about the welfare of the models". -Claire</i>
Not supportive	<i>"My mother agency, [is small so] they know about my personal life... but it doesn't stop the s*** talking [...] like they're so good at manipulating it's actually pretty impressive". -Diana</i>	<i>"When I was fearful and young, I sometimes forgot I had human rights and I was often too shy to defend myself [to my agency and industry professionals]". - Isabelle</i>	<i>"I've had to learn through my own experiences [...] I've barely talked about [well-being related issues] with [my agency] [...] so I've rarely had that [...] "how does that make you feel" [type of conversation]". -Nina</i>	

"Table 3 Comparison table of models' relationship with agency"

As for supportive agencies, it is interesting to note how Jennifer and Maddie feel 'lucky' for having received fair treatment and support from their agencies. Hence, models that have been treated with basic human decency feel like they are lucky, which speaks volumes about how models continued to be treated in the industry. Ashley's quote highlights a few interesting aspects. "I trust my agencies to control the work I do" shows how agencies do in fact control a large part of models' careers; however, Ashley does not seem to be put off by this. Rather she has established a symbiotic relationship with

her agency, and she expresses being “pleased” by it. This shows how models may be able to receive relevant feedback and justify the demands of their agencies through experience.

Claire was one of the few models who mentioned that she feels that her well-being is looked after by their agency (without using the term “lucky”). Moreover, Claire emphasizes how the well-being of a model is dependent on one’s agency. This could potentially answer why Jennifer and Maddie feel “lucky” for being placed with a caring agent. However, this would imply that for models’ well-being to be promoted, their agents must be more aware of what happens when they send the models out into the world. The only people that seem to hold this knowledge are the ones who have modeled themselves. This could suggest that more agencies need more ex-models in powerful positions.

As for agencies that are not as supportive, Diana mentions “manipulation” and Isabelle mentions how she forgets she has “human rights” which further highlights how incredibly altered experiences models can have in their own occupation. However, this shows how the dynamic environment of the modeling industry may be more sought out to gain advantage of the skills models have, in turn for monetary gain. Through either being simply lucky or unlucky with the agent a model worked with, many models still highlighted several issues they had in the industry. Some had the confidence to speak up, whilst others had to face some burdensome feelings and/or fear of speaking up. This will be discussed in the following section.

This theme discussed how models often feel alone because they lack knowledge on how to navigate their occupation. To feel less alone, models emphasized the importance of friendships and support groups. Models also felt that their well-being was completely dependent on the type of agency or agent they had. Ending up with a supportive agent led models to perceive their work well-being as more sought after.

4.3. Power dynamics

The previously discussed theme highlighted that the power dynamics of the industry leave models to lack control over their work. When faced with issues, models expressed fear of speaking up, as they were afraid of becoming blacklisted³. Moreover, models often felt subject to accepting their role as the less powerful ones.

A common aspect that models discussed was the lack of control they have over their work schedule. Most models were required to keep their schedules open in case of a new gig. This can provide feelings of uncertainty concerning future jobs, as well as a lack of control over private matters, as models are expected to always be “available” for anything. Isabelle’s quote (see Table 2, Theme 3: example 1) highlights how speaking up sometimes makes her feel like a burden. This clarifies that speaking up may induce anxious feelings, as it reminds models of their powerless role when required to question specific aspects that bring them despair regarding the future. Isabelle uses words like “soothing” and “burden” to emphasize how it is difficult to find comfort within her occupation. This could highlight an issue that goes beyond just well-being and feeling secure within your occupation, as there are clear signs of fear and despair.

An interesting connection was discovered from the interview data. It seemed that the more experience a model had had, the more confident she felt in speaking up about issues concerning the workplace. However, this didn’t fit into every model’s case, as there seemed to exist another pattern – the younger that a model had started, the more she seemed to have to accept the pressures of the industry. However, in most circumstances, models felt that they had learned to be able to speak up through their own experiences. This highlights the power imbalances models face in their work. Consider these aspects in the table (Table 4) on the following page:

³ Blacklisting=denying people from employment

Age when starting modeling	Experience as a model (years)	Example Narrative
13	9	<i>"I think models should speak up more, which they can't, cause they're afraid they'll get blacklisted and nobody's going to believe them [...] There's all these powerful other people who just say that 'oh she's complaining cause she's hungry or because she didn't get the job' ". -Maddie</i>
21	9	<i>"I think I'm of that age now that I know how to look after myself. I'm able to speak up that what [...] works for me and what doesn't. Maybe when I started [...] I didn't know my own boundaries, but now I can recognize them very well". -Avery</i>
16	12	<i>"I've learned to speak up and be more confident in situations when I'm discussing with my agents about jobs or general direction in my career". -Ashely</i>
20	12	<i>"I had to say something and obviously from that day on he never booked me again. [...] I question just like should I have not said anything and play this stupid game and just ignore it and just be the model". -Jennifer</i>

"Table 4 Comparison table of experience vs. confidence to speak up"

Maddie discusses how she wishes models had more power in tackling difficult aspects of their job; however, this may not always be as easy as it seems. Maddie's statement shows how the power dynamics of the industry seem to leave models' voices unheard when trying to look out for themselves. Maddie seems to apply this issue to models in general – as she feels that this is an issue all models face. However, it could be deduced that since Maddie began modeling at such a young age, she has grown up with the pressures and uncertainties of the modeling industry, leaving her to feel threatened to speak up. Maddie also mentions "powerful other people" which shows how models are subject to being controlled by everyone but themselves. Becoming blacklisted seems to be a true fear for Maddie as well, which could depict that models may truly feel afraid of stating out issues that they face in their daily lives.

Avery highlights how she's been able to find her role in the industry by "learning" to do so. She expresses having become more confident throughout her 9 years of experience, potentially highlighting previous experiences where she was afraid to speak up. This further shows that by gaining more experience within the industry, models may gain confidence in speaking up. Ashley reflects a similar pattern in her career.

Although Jennifer expressed feeling confident in her career, there was a specific instance she recalled that led her to question the power imbalances of the industry.

Jennifer recalled being burnt out at one point, and out of frustration she had spoken up to a booker as she had felt uncertain about when she was going to be hired. Jennifer's quote highlights how she had to accept her role by not speaking up about uncertain factors and thus, she had to ignore the bad factors and "just be the model". This phrase is alluring, as it seems like Jennifer acknowledges that being a model means not having the freedom to speak up about issues she's facing in her daily work, which would be in line with Maddie's statement. It is interesting to notice Jennifer's use of "this stupid game" which could reflect agents and other industry professionals playing with pawns (that is, models) in a game, at the expense of their well-being.

However, these findings bring up an issue. It seems that only through "learning" and "experience" do models feel the confidence to speak up. This seems to be a more deeply rooted issue that the modeling industry has. Considering the above-mentioned aspects, it could be assumed that modeling is a tough occupation to navigate through. This theme discussed how there exists deeply rooted power dynamics in the modeling industry which leaves models to feel alone in their occupation, as they have to learn to navigate the occupation through their own experience. Moreover, because of the power dynamics, models felt afraid that it wasn't within their job role to be critical and thus speak up over issues regarding their daily work. The power dynamics led some models to feel threatened over losing their job, which shows how models may perceive themselves as having hindered work well-being.

4.4. Challenging work

When questioned if the interviewees thought modeling was a difficult occupation, almost all answered affirmatively. Some models stated feeling rewarded for completing challenging tasks. On the other hand, some models discussed that since they do not feel rewarded for completing tasks, they are considering changing occupations as the job does not seem as fulfilling anymore. Moreover, some models highlighted the mental struggles that they have in the occupation. Five out of twelve models specifically mentioned the industry being mentally draining.

Ava's quote (see Table 2, Theme 4: example 2) shows that the uncertainty of finding work is "mentally draining" which shows how deeply the uncertain nature of the modeling industry can affect models. Ava's quote shows how the lack of guidance implicitly makes modeling a challenging occupation. In her quote, Ava shows self-reflection as a tool to try and understand her ambivalent feelings about the meaningfulness of her occupation. Moreover, Ava also shows signs of feeling like she is wasting her time and efforts on the "formalities" of the occupation. Furthermore, Sofia felt completely surprised by the toll the occupation has on her mental health. She described the following:

"The challenge that [the occupation] demands was a complete surprise for me, [...] I thought modeling was just photoshoots and catwalks [...] but it actually includes such an extensive amount of mental pressures, appearance pressures, and being able to tolerate uncertainty". -Sofia

From Sofia's statement, it is clear to identify why most models felt that modeling was a challenging occupation. "A complete surprise" depicts how Sofia had to discover how to deal with her mental health to succeed in her work. Sofia also highlights how models may indeed face mental health issues because of the lack of guidance they are offered at the starting points of their careers. This shows how there is ultimately more to what meets the eye in modeling. The viewer often only sees a beautiful photograph capturing hair caught in the wind, whilst not knowing the true reality models face behind the scenes. Although most models felt modeling to be a challenging occupation, some models became hungry for success, as when they completed challenging tasks, they felt extremely rewarded. Consider the following:

"I do [succeed in challenging tasks], I love challenges and moments that [...] take me out of my comfort zone. I'm hungry for success". -Ashley

From Ashley's and Claire's comments (see Claire's from Table 2, Theme 4: example 1) it seems that although modeling may take a toll on mental health, the work in return can give a powerful sensation of success when they do succeed in challenging tasks. Ashley describes being "hungry for success" to depict how gaining power in her occupation gives her gratification. Claire also refers to her "dreams coming true" to

showcase that although the industry may require an extensive amount of work, in the end, it feels surreal to be able to succeed. Therefore, although lacking in control of the work they attain, when models did find challenging work to do, they felt overfilled with joy. Avery on the other hand reflected how although she loves certain aspects of modeling such as traveling and meeting new people, she's recently started to consider some of the work boring:

"I somehow feel like they're [gigs] quite boring. [...] they haven't been inspiring lately [...] I mean when I travel it's fun and I like modeling, but sometimes the work isn't as fulfilling anymore". -Avery

Avery also stated that she wishes to change occupation sometime in the future. In her quote above, it is easy to identify that Avery is navigating through the pros and cons of her occupation and having a hard time figuring out what exactly she wants to receive from the occupation. By using words such as "boring" and "inspiring" she contrasts two opposite ideas but links them together to highlight how she feels uninspired with her work. This poses a challenge for reaching relatedness. Although Avery seems to contemplate whether the work is "fun enough" for her, it seems that Avery has found comfort in her occupation and doesn't necessarily know which way to continue.

This theme discussed how models feel that their occupation is challenging. Some felt surprised and mentally drained from the challenges faced within the occupation, whereas others felt extremely rewarded for completing challenging tasks. Thus, models had altering opinions on their own perceptions of their occupation.

4.5. Changes in body image

On top of completing challenging tasks, some models felt that the challenges of the overall industry had induced changes in their body image. Comments from agents led some models to deal with body-image issues; however, some models felt that modeling had given them a new profound confidence boost. Five out of twelve models stated having felt pressure to lose weight. The remaining seven stated that they were naturally skinny and did not have to deal with external pressures to be thin.

Sofia's quote (see Table 2, Theme 5: example 1) shows how she experienced a confidence boost rather than pressure to change her appearance, as she noticed that her natural body type fit in well with modeling standards. "Everything changed" reflects a deeper more meaningful journey that Sofia has faced through finding confidence in her body with the help of modeling. She even describes herself as having an "edgy weird skinny look" to depict that beauty isn't always categorized by specific characteristics, but rather uniqueness. Through Sofia's comment, there is a slight hint of gratitude she feels for her occupation, as she gives her work credit for being able to attain such confidence.

A few models felt that their occupation had however led to unfortunate results concerning body image. An unexpected relationship was noticed through the interviews: the younger that a model started in the occupation, the more out of touch she felt with her body image and blamed her insecurities on the industry. Maddie and Diana (see Diana's quote from Table 2, Theme 5: example 2) both reflected on how their body image would be completely different if they would have never modeled. Maddie started modeling at 13 years old, and Diana at 14.

"If I wouldn't've done modeling, I think my perspective of my body would be so different". -Maddie

It is interesting enough to see Maddie and Diana have such similar thoughts. Diana uses bold words to emphasize her view on herself by stating "I know / I would" to showcase how the pressures of the industry have fabricated her body image. Maddie refrains from using such bold words to describe the effect the pressures of the industry had on her, rather she states "I think" and that her perspective would be "different", and not necessarily better. It could be argued that it may not directly have been the industry pressures that caused Maddie to have trouble attaining a confident self-image, but rather the result of industry pressures, which caused Maddie to have a high internalized thin ideal. Both Diana and Maddie discussed the comments and results that caused them to struggle with a positive body image:

"My [agents] were like [...] jump up and down, so I jumped, and they were like 'everything that just moved when you were naked, you need to get rid of. Cause it's

fat'. And one time I had come home from Fashion Week [...] and once I went to my agency, [...] I'm being bombarded with like 'your thighs are touching in this and this photo' [...] and this went on for an hour and a half. [...] and they're like 'what are you gonna do about it? Like please only eat lettuce and come back here in two months.' [...] after this I took a year break because I was like I can't do this". -Diana

*"And then it officially started going really bad and so my parents checked me into the clinic. [...] But then when I was at my lowest that's when I'd get the most work... So, it felt like I have to stay super skinny. It was so f***** up. And then I feel like it completely twisted my self-image [...] Sometimes it's hard for me to get dressed in the morning cause I'll look at myself in the mirror and I'll cry for hours". -Maddie*

Both Maddie and Diana seem to reflect on how external pressures to be thin took a mental toll on them, in Diana's case, she had to take a break, and in Maddie's case, she had to recover from an eating disorder at a clinic. Diana's and Maddie's case of the external pressures they faced highlights the true colors of what models may face in the industry. These instances further highlight how models' experience in the industry is completely subjective and dependent on the way their agents treat them. Since most models did discuss the thinness of models; it was also mentioned by Jennifer how the current French law banning models with a BMI less than 18 is "fake":

"I mean this law about weight, that's completely fake. I also don't have a normal BMI, and I would say I'm still on the heavier side compared to other models". -Jennifer

Jennifer highlights how the industry seems to be lying to the outside to appear to be on "better" terms with mass media; however, she knows this law is fake as she is also a model with a BMI of less than 18 and continues to walk fashion shows. Moreover, quite many models also mentioned having a BMI of less than 18; however, this had not been an obstacle in them finding work. It could be recognized from Jennifer's comment that she doesn't necessarily trust that the industry is trying to improve in terms of promoting models' well-being, but rather trying to seem "healthier" to the overall public.

This theme discussed how the modeling industry may have both positive and negative influences on body image. Moreover, the laws that have been set into place to combat the thinness of models are circled.

4.6. Changing traditions and promoting well-being

To promote well-being, the models included in the study had ideas on which traditions of the industry should change. Multiple models mentioned how positive psychology training programs should be implemented in the industry. Moreover, some felt that the current employee structure of the industry should be changed. Seven out of twelve models highlighted how the industry lacks diversity. This was a significant finding considering no question directed models to discuss diversity.

The main tradition that models wish would change was for the industry to be more inclusive and diverse. Two models found the lack of diversity to be so non-existent that the only thing they can do in response is laugh about it. Moreover, many of the models felt that the body positivity movement was possibly making a difference on social media platforms, but not in high-end fashion. On the topic of social media, Jennifer had some interesting thoughts. She highlighted how diversity is usually only seen if the model in question has a lot of followers on social media:

“What I’m really not happy about this is that most of the time [diversity] has to do with follower numbers [...] if it’s only that that brings diversity, then it’s actually really sad. [If there’s a model] that’s a bigger one, or a very short one, or very tall one [...] they have to have at least 30,000 [followers] which is really stupid”. -Jennifer

If follower numbers are the only making factor in there being diversity in the modeling world, this brings even further issues for bringing inclusivity to the runway. Jennifer expresses feelings of sadness and criticizes the modeling industry for its stupidity, which depicts how the modeling industry after all may only be after conservative traditional ideas of western beauty, as well as only using diverse models when it brings a fashion show or brands more attention. Many models argued that it shouldn’t feel forced to show diversity, but rather it should be normal. Ashley on the other hand

wished for a more regulated pay schedule to avoid having to question where her money was:

“I wish the ‘tradition’ of being paid in 3 months or more would change. The ridiculous waiting times of getting paid. I wish there would be a system to be paid at least within 2 months, and if it goes due, the client has to pay extra”. -Ashley

Ashely explains how the current structure of payments is “ridiculous” to emphasize the struggles and frustration models must go through to receive their paychecks. Ashley also suggests subtle hints of how the industry does not necessarily view models as employees. For the industry to realize models are fair employees, the responsible parties should pay extra. It seems that the modeling industry is after all monetary driven and does not seem to care about models not getting paid.

Lily’s quote (see Table 2, Theme 6: example 1) refers to the power dynamics of the modeling industry, as she suggests that there is mistreatment of models within the industry. Although Lily speaks in general of how this should change, her reflection of using words like “equals” and “treatment” makes the lack of control models have over their work evident. Lily hints that their remains to exist fair and proper treatment of models, as they are often valued for their physical appearance rather any other humane attributes.

Sofia’s quote (see table 2, Theme 6: example 2) depicts multiple thoughts on how well-being should be promoted in the industry. Sofia reflects on a lot of the previously discussed themes within this quote. However, what is important to note is Sofia’s direct comment on the lack of autonomy she has, which quite literally makes her furious. It is evident, at least in Sofia’s case, that models gaining more power within their role is a crucial make-or-break factor in how models can feel secure in their occupation. Sofia also mentions mental coaching, as she reflects on how models should be given extensive knowledge on preventing falling down a negative rabbit hole considering uncertainties, pressures, and further issues concerning daily work. It is also significant to notice Sofia’s mention of “we’re not just models, we’re people”, which further reflects how for models’ well-being to be promoted, models need to be treated in a humanely.

So, how exactly can well-being to be promoted? It is clear that first, mental coaching should be offered to allow models to feel mentally secure when beginning their occupation. Second, being treated humanely and given employee benefits, as well as a sense of power within the workplace. Third, being able to speak up about work-related issues, as models are “not told anything”. To further reflect on how well-being should be promoted, Jennifer felt that it was completely dependent on the agency to what extent a model can feel that her well-being is promoted:

“Oh, it’s definitely the agencies’ responsibility. [...] Every single agency should have psychologists on board who can help especially the new models, they have no clue what’s happening”. -Jennifer

Jennifer’s comment seems to clarify all the above themes presented as to why models feel like they have limited control in their occupation. As models are subject to face power imbalances and fear of speaking up, having open communication with agents seems like the most viable option for models’ well-being to be promoted in terms of Jennifer’s comment. Moreover, Jennifer mentions having psychologists on board to guide models in potentially not feeling alone in their occupation. Multiple models mentioned that this would be an extremely positive step forward to promote the well-being of fashion models. Therefore, it seems that most models wish for the aspects that would help them navigate their mental struggles in the occupation.

This theme discussed the areas of the modeling industry that they would wish to change for them to feel that their work well-being is promoted. Models suggested implementing training programs, as well as having psychologists on board.

These findings above have discussed the main results from the semi-structured interviews to gain more information on the work well-being of fashion models.

5. DISCUSSION

This section will compare the data acquired from the interviews to the literature presented in the literature review. The purpose of this section is to identify the relevance of the findings. This section will follow a similar structure as the findings, by dedicating each theme to its own section. The final section will provide a new and developed framework. To begin the analysis for each theme, I will discuss the findings in light of SDT.

5.1. Discussing uncertain work environment

This theme highlighted how the lack of autonomy is a leading factor that causes fashion models uncertainty over their occupation. Although the findings of e.g., Meyer et al. (2007) do not highlight how autonomy is the biggest struggle models face within their occupation, there is still validity to claiming that models do in fact lack autonomy in their work.

There were other clear connections to previously presented literature, as well. Cartwright and Cooper's (1993) statement claiming that job insecurity may often cause occupational stress is in line with the findings of the interviews, as it was detectable through the narratives that models portrayed signs of extensive stress over the insecurities of their work. In addition, Mears (2008), Pinto et al. (2020), and Fortune Super et al. (2021) discuss that models struggle in attaining employee benefits, and further safety protections, which was found to be evident for the participants of this study. Moreover, it was found that the models of this study often deal with late payments and non-payment, which aligns with the findings of, for example, Sodomsy (2014) and Pinto et al. (2020).

In terms of rejection, the findings were quite identical to the findings made by Mears and Finlay (2005) and Fortune Super et al. (2021). However, what was surprising considering rejection was that since models had become so accustomed to the rejections, they had found coping mechanisms to deal with these rejections. This is interesting considering the findings made by Mears and Finlay (2005) who argue that

models practice emotional labor to deal with rejections. Through the findings, it could be argued that models do in fact practice emotional labor, as they are constantly managing their own feelings to avoid experiencing burnout, or further implications to their self-image. Therefore, models' well-being at work may be limited due to the difficulties in attaining work-related satisfactions (Danna & Griffin, 1999). In addition, models expressed several negative associations with the uncertainties of their work, which may further limit their well-being (Rodríguez-Muñoz & Sanz-Vergel, 2013).

The narratives of the models seem to follow the structure presented in the first conceptual framework. That is, the employment structure leads models to deal with uncertainty and pressure, and they are further influenced by the lack of autonomy and the challenges models face within their occupation.

5.2. Discussing lack of guidance

Since models felt lonely in their occupation, they highlighted the importance of friendship and support groups. The lack of communication with agents and agencies led models to feel like they had both unexpected and too high demands for their roles. Arguably, this shows lacking in competence, as outlined by Baard et al. (2004) and Bucher (2013). The findings made by Meyer et al. (2007) suggest that models may have a hard time reaching "relatedness", a component of SDT, due to the competitiveness and nature of the modeling industry. The findings of this study show the opposite of the one made by Meyer et al. (2007), as most models accentuated how the friendships that they had built were vital for them to manage their mental health. Moreover, the findings also show how although models lack autonomy, through experience, models may be able to receive relevant feedback and justify the demands of their agencies. This could suggest that models may after all be able to fulfill competence (Bucher, 2013). However, this highlights the critique posed for SDT by Van den Broeck et al. (2016), as positive outcomes may overshadow negative ones.

In the literature review, the studies made by Mears and Finlay (2005), Mears (2010), and Rodgers et al. (2020) discussed how becoming a model does not require training or education which creates a low entry criterion into the industry. The authors claim

that this results in oversupply, which makes it difficult for models to find work. Although these studies are partially in line with the findings made in this thesis, some findings in the interviews were surprising. The low entry criterion and lack of training did seem to enhance competition and make it difficult for models to attain work; however, what was more pressing for the models was not the enhanced competition, but rather the sheer lack of knowledge and lack of tools in how to navigate being in the occupation of a fashion model. The models did not directly discuss anything negative related to the competitiveness of the industry but rather emphasized how being sent out into the world alone gave them feelings of anxiety and frustration, which is aligned with the findings of Fortune Super et al. (2021). The models in the study emphasized that this frustrated them, as they had to learn how to thrive in their occupation through experience, and quite literally, only through experience. To my knowledge, this has not been pointed out by previous literature, which makes this finding significant.

Another vital factor the models considered was necessary for their well-being was the relationship they had with their agents. Although, for example, the findings made by Fortune Super et al. (2021) show that when models visited their agencies it gave them heightened anxiety, it was highlighted by the interview data how models feel that it is completely up to their agency in how they experience their own well-being. Multiple models mentioned that agencies should be responsible for maintaining and promoting models' well-being. However, only some models felt that their well-being had been effectively looked after by their agencies and agents, which further suggests extreme room for improvement within the industry. To my knowledge, the importance of agency and model relationships has not been identified in previous literature.

This theme suggests a change to the conceptual framework. It seems that although the employment structure and the lack of autonomy affect the uncertainty and pressure models face, the lack of guidance further enhances the uncertainties and pressures models face.

5.3. Discussing power dynamics

Although models' lack of autonomy was discussed in the literature review, it was only evident through the findings how big of a role models' agencies play in how models

can attain well-being. Throughout the findings, it was discovered that models do in fact lack in autonomy in their work, as they seemed to be intensely out of touch with how they can control specific outcomes of their work. From the interviews, it was discovered that models' lack of autonomy may even be difficult to change, as the powerless role that models have in the industry leaves models to having to accept their role. These findings were in line with Meyer et al. (2007), and thus it could be argued that models lack an extensive amount of autonomy within their occupation. The lack of autonomy was found to be further challenged by models' lack in competence, as the challenging aspects of work made it difficult to speak up about issues concerning their work.

The lack of control over one's work was accredited to the control that agencies hold over models. The findings of Rodgers et al. (2017) and Wissinger (2009) are in line with this finding, as both discussed how agencies hold a vast amount of control over models, and how models lack control over the development of their own careers. Continuing with Meyer et al. (2007) study on SDT and fashion models' well-being, models' well-being may be limited by the feeling that they have to accept their powerless role within the occupation. Therefore, when considering the findings made by Eatough and Spector (2014) who claim that a lack of control can result in negative job satisfaction, it could be argued that models' lack of control in their work can result in negative associations with their work, and thus risk models in attaining work well-being. Thus, models' psychological well-being could be argued to be limited (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009).

As for the conceptual framework, this theme further highlighted the struggles that models face concerning their lack of autonomy within their occupation. Moreover, since models lack in autonomy, they feared speaking up. Because models lack autonomy and fear speaking up, this induces feelings of seeing one's own occupation as challenging. Thus, there seems to exist a pattern: all the factors relevant to a model's occupation make models perceive their work as (too) challenging.

5.4. Discussing challenging work

Meyer et al. (2007) argue that models' well-being at work may be challenged as models are often appreciated for their physical attributes rather than them being able to perform difficult tasks. On the other hand, Baard et al. (2004) outline that competence consists of succeeding in challenging tasks and attaining wanted outcomes, which was discovered to be viable in the case of fashion models. Models did feel like they succeeded in completing challenging tasks, as overall, they found their occupation challenging. However, most models expressed that when they did succeed, they felt extremely rewarded. This would suggest that models can fulfill competence according to the criterion expressed by Baard et al. (2004). However, the findings made by Meyer et al. (2007) after all are in line with the findings. Throughout the findings, it was discovered that models are in fact appreciated for rather their physical appearance rather than other skills. Thus, on top of struggling to fulfill competence, models also showed signs of lacking in relatedness, as the occupation seemed to pose questions of the work being meaningful enough.

Therefore, in terms of SDT, models do suggest having hindered well-being because of the occupation being too challenging. Ultimately, this was a key finding made with the interview data. These findings reiterate the pattern found above. Therefore, in simpler words, the fact that modeling is *too* challenging hinders a models' well-being within their occupation. This is supported by the arguments made by Harter et al. (2003) who argue that too much challenge can hinder well-being, which is evident in the case of fashion models.

This section also highlighted the importance of mental health. Although there were no implicit signs of depression and anxiety, there were some keywords recognized within the narratives to suggest models having anxious feelings over non-payment and other further uncertainties. Fortune Super et al. (2021) argues how models may have a higher risk of having depressed or anxious feelings considering their job, but this cannot be verified by the findings. However, no question directed models to discuss anxiety and depression. This suggests room for future research.

Another perspective of analyzing the meaningfulness of being in the occupation of a fashion model could be done by using the literature of Page and Vella-Brodrick (2009) and Danna and Griffin (1999). Since models stated that the work may not always feel as fulfilling as they would like, this is a sign of hindered well-being, as this was a finding made by Page and Vella-Brodrick (2009). In addition, Danna and Griffin (1999) state that well-being consists of spirituality, that is feeling a sense of belonging. If models feel that towards the end of their occupation they lose spirituality, their well-being may be hindered if modeling is not a meaningful enough occupation.

Thus, when considering the conceptual framework, this theme only highlights the how modeling is challenging. More specifically, when combining the uncertainties, lack of autonomy, pressures, mental struggles, etc., it can be recognized that the fact that modeling is *too* challenging hinders a model's well-being.

5.5. Discussing changes in body image

In terms of SDT, this theme helped discover how models further are challenged by the lack of autonomy and relatedness. The lack of autonomy derives from the intense pressures (Buchard, 2013) some models faced to lose weight (e.g., Preti et al., 2008; Mears & Finlay, 2005; Pinto et al., 2020). This was in line with a multitude of literature presented in the literature review. However, surprisingly enough, models also seemed to pose challenges for relatedness, as the pressures seemed to cause issues in feeling belongingness within the occupation (Buchard, 2013). Since the study made by Meyer et al. (2007) posed suggestions rather than qualitatively generated research, these findings are potentially the first-ever generated regarding fashion models' well-being analyzed through SDT.

Through the findings, it was discovered that models felt both positive impacts and negative impacts on their self-confidence as a result of starting modeling. Since most models in this study expressed being naturally skinny, the findings of Zancu and Enea (2017) are arguably valid, as they claimed that models are naturally skinny, and may not feel the pressure to lose weight. Although existing literature seemed to debunk the author's ideas of models not being pressured to be thin, through the findings of this

research, Zancu and Enea (2017) findings seem feasible. Although most models felt that they had not been intensely pressured to remain thin, there were still a handful of models who had experienced extreme issues with their self-image as a result of negative comments from industry professionals, as well as pressures to become thinner. Considering the work of e.g., Preti et al. (2008), Treasure et al. (2008), Di Corrado et al. (2021), and Rodgers et al. (2017), the research conducted in this thesis was in line with their claims of models being pressured to be thin.

Therefore, if we follow Carr and Mercer (2017) claim stating that being in the occupation of a fashion model can influence an individual's self-perception and self-confidence, it could be argued that the influence can be both positive and negative, as opposed to just being negative. Furthermore, there was no evidence of models displaying any unhealthy coping habits such as alcohol or drug abuse to cope with external pressures which were theorized in the literature review by Santonastaso et al. (2002). Although some models did mention the use of alcohol, there were no evident signs of alcoholism.

Although much of the literature review focused on models having a higher drive for thinness than non-models (e.g., Preti et al., 2008; Treasure et al., 2008; Swami & Szmigielska, 2013; Rodgers et al., 2017), the findings of this research cannot respond to whether this would be the case for most fashion models. Although most models claimed that their job does require them to stay thin, and some displayed signs of having a high-internalized thin ideal, it is not applicable to label this on every model in the study.

Moreover, as this study only included fashion models, any comparative conclusions cannot be conducted as to if models have a higher drive for thinness than non-models. Much of the literature review covered the pressures models face within their occupation, i.e., pressures to be thin; however, this was not highlighted to be the biggest issue models face in the industry. Albeit some models did blame the industry for intensely pressuring them to lose weight, this was not the general case. Some models in this study were even told to not lose weight, as they were even *too* thin. Therefore, with this study, it is hard to label a one-size-fits-all kind of analysis to understand if all models feel the pressure to remain thin, or to lose weight. More often

than not, models felt that the uncertainties and power dynamics, as well as lack of support, were the main factors that made them feel out of place within the industry, and not the pressures to remain thin.

In terms of the conceptual framework, this theme highlights the further pressures that models face. This theme was evident in the literature review, thus it does not pose any major changes to the overall structure of the conceptual framework.

5.6. Discussing changing traditions & promoting well-being

Thus far, it has been recognized that theorizing the work well-being of fashion models is difficult to apply to the majority, as work well-being after all considers the subjective attitudes and feeling an individual feels about their work, which is in line with the findings made by Schulte and Vainio (2010). However, considering what models wish to change about their occupation, SDT may in fact be a viable framework for describing well-being. Since models wish to fulfill their autonomy and relatedness of their work, this in turn would also allow for competence to be fulfilled. This is an interesting finding, as it would show that SDT after all is a viable framework in generalizing the work well-being in the case of fashion models. This also suggests a major change to the conceptual framework which was presented in the literature review. This new conceptual framework will be presented in the next section.

From the findings, it could be deduced that models do struggle with attaining mental health, as they are often required to please others within the industry, rather than being able to focus on themselves. Moreover, not being in control of their work seems to take a mental toll on fashion models. Considering SDT, the findings made by Ryan (2009) suggest that a person's mental health is greater when one has autonomy over their behavior, which seems to apply to the case of fashion models.

Despite there being difficulties in theorizing the overall well-being of fashion models, models had some general ideas of how they believe well-being at work could be promoted. Almost every model emphasized how training programs need to be implemented in the industry, so that models do not feel insecure and out of place when

beginning their work. There is a lack of literature covering how the work well-being of fashion models should be promoted, making this finding significant. It is interesting to see how almost every model emphasized that there should be a work psychologist available at the agency every day. Therefore, it seems that most models wish for improvements regarding their job descriptions as fair and respected employees, which aligned with the findings of Rodgers et al. (2017).

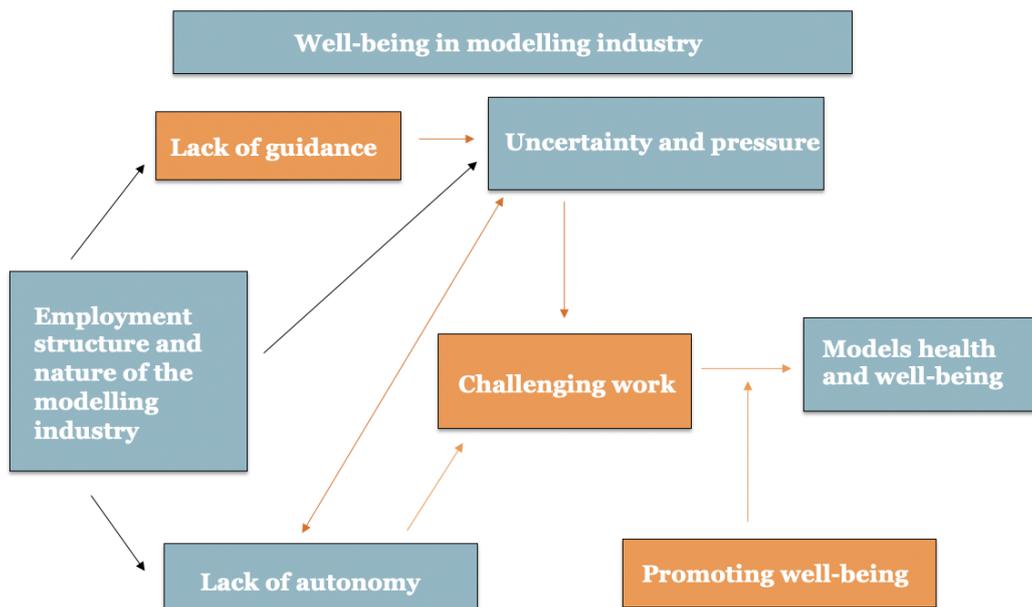
Another interesting aspect that was seen in this theme was that models felt the need to call the industry out for its lack of diversity. No questions in the interview asked anything related to diversity, which made this vital to point out. It was briefly discussed in the literature review that there have been some efforts to attain more diverse, and less extremely skinny models. However, the models of this study did not see it this way. The body positivity movement in high-end fashion was debunked quite instantly, as models felt that there had been almost only slight changes in promoting diversity. If people of color or people who differ from the western ideals of beauty are often underemployed, they may experience major stress and ill health (Schulte & Vainio, 2010). Thus, the lack of diversity can have direct implications for the well-being of fashion models.

Models documented knowing people whose agencies had forged their health certificates, and multiple models mentioned having a BMI of less than 18. Thus, the findings made by Fortune Super et al. (2021) on modeling agencies forging health certificates seem to, unfortunately, be true. Despite multiple models having a BMI of less than 18, the models stated that they were naturally skinny and healthy, which would prove the ideas proposed by Nordqvist (2022) of BMI being an inaccurate representation of health to be true. Moreover, there was no explicit interest from models regarding placing a minimum BMI which would support the findings made by Rodgers et al. (2017).

As for the conceptual framework, this theme highlights how important promoting well-being is. Since all models felt the addition of these tools would be a necessity to the industry, this theme suggests a new addition to the framework.

5.7. Development of conceptual framework

The conceptual framework presented in the literature review had been derived from previous literature to explain the factors that affect fashion models' work well-being. The changes to the framework have been briefly discussed throughout the discussion; however, they must be visualized. The new and improved conceptual framework is visible below (Figure 2). To better understand the conceptual framework in its entirety I have both visualized the new changes in orange.



"Figure 2 Fashion models' perception of their work well-being"

Before analyzing the framework in more depth, I will discuss the most vital changes to the framework presented in the literature review. The first conceptual framework discussed how ultimately the uncertainties and pressures that models face, are the biggest factor in determining how models view their work well-being. However, throughout the findings of the interviews, it was discovered that all aspects of being in the occupation of a fashion model led models to view their work as *challenging* which evidently had the biggest effect on models' health and well-being. Although both conceptual frameworks discuss what factors affect a model's well-being, it was only through the interviews that it was found how vital of a role promoting well-being plays. In the following paragraphs, I will explain the framework in more depth.

Throughout the interviews, it was found that the *employment structure and nature of the modeling industry* results in the *lack of guidance, lack of autonomy*, as well as *uncertainty and pressure* within the industry. In the literature review, it was discussed how the employment structure leads models to face expectations and challenges. Although still a vital part of the framework, it was discovered that every factor leading up to the expectations makes modeling a *challenging* occupation.

The importance of the *lack of guidance* was not evident in the literature review, hence its addition. The *lack of guidance* influences the *uncertainties and pressures* models face within their occupation, as models do not know how to manage their occupation. The *uncertainty and pressure* and *lack of autonomy* go hand in hand, as models may be afraid to speak up over the issues that are causing their *uncertainties*. The *lack of autonomy* leads models to deal with the *pressures* of the industry e.g., having to be available, having to be thin, and having to accept a powerless role. Moreover, the modeling industry has intense power dynamics leaving models subject to accepting a less powerful role, hence the *lack of autonomy*, which was already evident in the literature review.

The *lack of autonomy* and *uncertainties & pressures* are ultimately what make modeling a *challenging occupation*. Models are left with little control, and thus they face further uncertainty over the entirety of their occupation and feel pressured to subject to a less powerful role. Therefore, to attain well-being, well-being needs to be *promoted* by, for example, implementing training programs and offering models support in managing their mental health.

This developed conceptual framework attempted to theorize the factors that affect fashion models' work well-being to answer the research objectives. The main findings of this thesis will be discussed in full in the following section.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This section concludes the main findings of this thesis. This section also covers the limitations of the study, as well as suggestions for future research. Lastly, I will analyze the implications for international business.

6.1. Main findings

This thesis aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do fashion models perceive the dynamic environment of the modeling industry?
2. How do models perceive their work well-being?
3. To what extent is Self-Determination theory a viable framework for analyzing the work well-being of fashion models?

The literature review gave a thorough analysis of existing literature to answer these questions. However, since well-being is subjective, the findings were necessary to answer the “perceive” part in questions one and two. As for the first question, both the literature review and findings show that the dynamic environment of the modeling industry often leaves models to perceive their role in their work as powerless, unstable, insecure, and uncertain. The models in this study recognized multiple areas of the modeling industry that require development, such as late or non-payment or lacking guidance in how to navigate the occupation. Several aspects models experienced within their occupation led them to see their occupation as *too* challenging, and thus models felt insecure considering their occupation.

As for the second question, models’ perceptions of their work well-being varied. However, this is not surprising considering that work well-being consists of perceptions, ideas, and feelings that an individual has. Therefore, in terms of this research question, there is no generalized applicable definition to explain how fashion models experience their work well-being, as it consisted of a multitude of factors. However, to provide a simple answer, models perceived their work well-being to be

limited due to the lack of autonomy, the challenges of the workplace, as well as the uncertainties and pressures of the industry. Most of these led models to have insightful ideas of how well-being could *and* should be promoted within the industry. Most models wished for training programs to be implemented in the industry as well as having psychologists available in the workplace. Since most models felt it was necessary to implement these factors into the workplace, it could be argued that models do perceive their work well-being to be hindered.

To answer the final question, although SDT showed some varied results in describing the work well-being of fashion models, it was inherently discovered that fashion models' work well-being is hindered when considering SDT. This is of value because the other findings also suggest that fashion models' work well-being is hindered for several reasons. Therefore, although SDT is a generalized framework, it still does seem to pose as a viable framework for discussing the work well-being of fashion models. By using SDT, the data generated in this thesis argues that models are challenged in pursuance of 'healthy human functioning'. Since models are mainly controlled by their agencies, and they lack control over essentially their entire occupation, models lack in autonomy. Moreover, since models perceive their occupation as challenging, and expressed having minimal guidance in navigating their occupation, models lack in competence. Lastly, since models seemed to question the meaningfulness of their occupation, they may lack in relatedness. Relatedness seemed to be the only aspect of SDT that models could potentially fulfill.

Overall, the findings of this thesis suggest that the work well-being of fashion models is limited. This thesis has attempted to justify the importance and relevance of studying this topic. By providing a thorough understanding of the well-being of fashion models and by providing them with the tools they need in their profession, we may finally come to having healthy role models to look up to.

6.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Like most research, this thesis encountered some limitations. Firstly, the overall topic of the thesis was broad, meaning that many aspects of work well-being were briefly

touched upon. To have gained more insight into work well-being, longer and more detailed interviews would have had to be prepared with possibly even more participants. Thus, it may have been more useful to limit the approach of the interviews to gain more insight into specific issues. Moreover, as the topic of the study is sensitive, the participants may have chosen to keep personal information to themselves; however, this is not certain. In addition, all of the participants of this study were female, which limits the scope of analyzing the work well-being of models. It is plausible that other gendered models have different perceptions of work well-being within their occupation.

Some suggestions for future research were recognized in the discussion. For example, there is a lack of literature that covers the power dynamics within the modeling industry. This seemed to be an issue that models recognized to affect their work well-being. Moreover, considering SDT, further research should be conducted to analyze whether the framework is viable in discussing work well-being. Further research could also study what exact methods and tools would aid in promoting well-being within the modeling industry and provide actual solutions to how the work well-being of fashion models could be promoted. However, it is not necessarily research that can aid in promoting fashion models' work well-being, but rather actual incentives implemented by the fashion and modeling industry. Lastly, further research should study the impacts of being in the occupation of a fashion model on mental health.

6.3. Implications for international business

Since fashion models work globally, their work well-being may often differ from country to country. This was evident in the findings as some felt that specific agencies only were looking for monetary benefit from models, and not treating them as employees. Therefore, to promote well-being, the implications for international business are that models need to be recognized as fair and respected employees globally, and not just within their own mother agencies. Thus, to promote fashion models' well-being, there need to be global efforts to do this. Moreover, country-specific laws don't seem to function even on a national scale, therefore laws need to be first nationally regulated, and then internationally regulated.

Moreover, these findings show how younger employees without formal qualifications may more often than not be used for their skills and other similar attributes. This topic brings a wider sense of relevance in discussing unethical work environments, and non-payment across a multitude of industries, namely the fashion industry. In the introduction, it was mentioned how the thesis projects wider importance of researching beauty, media, and well-being, which is ultimately true. It has been discussed how social media may have a negative impact on the viewer (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016), and it has further been discovered that quitting social media increases subjective well-being (Allcott et al., 2020). Since the world is more visual than ever, the impacts of beauty and fashion on social media are a relevant and new topic for further research. As businesses have moved online and social media works without borders, this makes the topic of the well-being of fashion models and influencers a global issue.

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8. APPENDICES

Any inquiries about the material collected for the purposes of this thesis can be directed towards the author of the thesis.

8.1 Interview Design

Following the findings made in the literature review, there were four clear themes that seemed to affect the well-being of models. The questions presented in the following parts were designed to help the researcher navigate which aspects could be of value to each interview, thus, the questions asked differed depending on interviewee's answers to other questions.

8.1.1 Models' role as independent contractors

The first major theme affecting the well-being of models was models' role as independent contractors. The questions in this category that were designed were the following:

1. How often have you felt uncertainty concerning your next paycheck?
2. To what extent does your agency control your work e.g., your personal schedule, or what work you do?
3. How easy is it for you to find work as a model?
4. Do you find yourself succeeding in challenging tasks in your work?
5. Is it easy for you to form lasting relationships at work? Do you feel that you are constantly competing against other fellow models?

This set of questions aimed to investigate more so the monetary aspect of modeling, as well as if individuals' feel satisfied with the amount of work that they do. In addition, the questions explored how much control models have over their work, as this was evidently a key component of Self-Determination theory presented in the literature review. Lastly, these questions focused on if models feel fulfilled, in other words, if they feel rewarded by the work that they do, as well as if they have a support group to navigate being in the occupation of a fashion model.

8.1.2 High internalized thin ideal

Another major finding of through the literature review was that models seem to display a high internalized thin ideal. Thus, this section aimed to explore whether this was a result of pressures from the industry, or whether models felt driven themselves to be thin. The questions in this category were the following:

1. To what extent has your agency/ other industry professionals pressured you to be thin, or pressured you in another way? If so, how have you dealt with it?
2. Have you ever had struggles concerning body image? How have you been able to overcome these?
3. How often do you feel objectified at work? In other words, do industry professionals view you rather as an object, or as a person? How does this affect your personal view of yourself?

These set questions aimed to explore why there seems to be an existing amount of the pressure to be thin. Moreover, it felt viable by the researcher to further question how models felt about their role, that is, do they feel like they are being treated in a humane manner, as the research suggested that models do not have exclusive work rights, and they often seem pressured to change their appearance.

8.1.3 Efforts to promote well-being

To guide in answering research objective 3, which is “To examine how well-being is promoted in the modeling industry through the eyes of fashion models”, the following set of questions were prepared. The questions are the following:

1. To what extent have governmental regulations improved the situation for fashion models from your perspective?
2. During your time as a model, have you ever wished specific ‘traditions’ of the modeling industry would change? If so, what are they, and what do you wish what would be improved?
3. How does your agency support your well-being?

These questions aimed to examine how models feel about their well-being being promoted, as well as if they would have any wishes to how it could be promoted more sensibly. In addition, it was viable to examine whether models felt that their agencies supported their well-being, or if it even was the agencies responsibility to look after the models.

8.1.4 Rejection from clients may discourage models

Finally, the last set of questions aimed to explore whether models feel like they can overcome rejection from clients, or if it seems to be an overpowering issue for them to combat. The questions are the following:

1. How do you deal with the more unpleasant parts of work, like rejection from clients?
2. To what extent have you felt discouraged in your occupation?

These questions aimed to examine whether rejection is taken personally, or if models are able to accept it as a part of their work. The second question was open-ended and remained mostly unanswered in most interviews.