

Emotional reactions to a democratic policy- decision: a Covid-19 lockdown case study.

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Abstract

This thesis researched the different emotional reactions to a decision-making process, particularly the reactions to the implementation of a severe lockdown imposed by the Dutch government on the 19th of December 2021. Within the framework of Behavioural Public Administration, five different aspects related to the decision-making process - communication, political biases, institutional-political trust, egotropic and sociotropic representations - are theorised to induce emotional reactions to a young population. Using the theory of Gu et al. 2019 “Three Primary Colour Model of Basic Emotions” the research has interviewed a specific group of students seeking to identify in their self-reported thoughts and perceptions emotional states regarding the policy-making processes and implementation. During the execution of a public decision, the population’s psychological reactions play a critical role in the compliance to the policy beyond the confirmation of the personal preference, nonetheless, there is a window for social and mental wellbeing disruption that needs to be taken into consideration (Cullen et al., 2020). After performing a statistical analysis, the research found that no emotional reactions can be strongly explained when the democratic decision-making process is seen as problematic. Only individual policy preference and the sociotropic representation are able to explain emotional variance.

Introduction

Emotions are a key aspect contributing to the quality of mental health. Their understanding can help comprehend why sometimes life is worth living and sometimes ending. Although there still lacks knowledge, agreement, and there are methodological impediments and inaccuracies for researching emotions (Scarantino & de Sousa, 2021), this phenomenon in the internal biological states of our mind have been tried to theorise from ancient times and from different disciplines; psychology and philosophy are two of the most prominent ones. However, generalisations within the different academic fields are hard to make. Emotions can differ in several dimensions such as for example, time: short-lived (e.g. short alarm reflexion) vs. long-lived (e.g. panic experienced when trapped on a lift) or in sophistication: primitive cognitive processes (e.g. fear of a weapon pointed towards us) vs. sophisticated processes (e.g. feeling lonely) (Scarantino & de Sousa, 2021).

Coming from a philosophical school, Scarantino and de Sousa (2021) proposed a list of shared conclusions among the whole body of literature that combined insights from philosophy, psychology, neuroscience and evolutionary biology. Emotions are not only mental states that are physically located in the brain, but they correlate with for example, facial or body expressions. Although these expressions vary from person to person and from culture to culture, the extensive body of literature largely agrees on the fact that emotions have an intentionality and an ability to represent. These intentions depend again on a context and on the individual. They are sometimes a helping trigger for an organism that is in danger, or a mechanism in a social contract. Emotions are not anymore the contradiction of reason, but they typically correlate with motivations for changing behaviours (Scarantino & de Sousa, 2021).

This micro-level psychological knowledge can be embedded in our macro-level political-administrative systems. Its synthesis can help further understand both fields of interest. Studying the relationship between politico-administrative factors and emotions, this research posts itself as aiming for bridges between disciplines. Grimmelikhuijsen and colleagues (2017) aimed in the same lines for a better understanding of the historical relationship between the disciplines of Psychology and Public Administration. The authors start with an introduction section recalling a claim from two of the most relevant public administration scholars, Herbert Simon and Dwight Waldo: an integration of psychological theories in public administration research. By definition, Behavioural Public Administration is: “the interdisciplinary analysis of public administration from the micro-level perspective of individual behaviour and attitudes by drawing on recent advances in our understanding of the underlying psychology and behaviour of individuals and groups” (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., (2017).

When looking at related fields such as Political Psychology, emotions have in the last decades slowly become more prominent in the research agenda. The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology, for example, included in 2013 a chapter dedicated to emotions (Brader & Marcus, 2013). The goal of the section in this handbook is to offer a historical overview on the approaches, theoretical propositions, and relationships between emotions and politics, as well as the reconciliation between reason and emotion. Political Psychology has taken insights from Social Psychology and has experienced the integration of new theoretical frameworks from related fields (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017). Additionally Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2017) consider behavioural economics closely related to Behavioural Public Administration. This later discipline focuses mainly on cognitive psychology to further explain the rational theory behind the individual decision-making processes, contrastingly with political psychology, which has adopted a more pluralistic view.

In essence, the present research article sets to understand how the macro-level is affecting the micro-level. How a decision made by people and for the people affects all the people. Yet, literature is limited (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017). Within this academic field, similar studies have focused on emotional reactions of citizens to different policy-making decisions. For example, Arnesen et al., (2019) studied the perceptions of citizens to hypothetical referendums; Esaiasson et al., (2017) studied the policy

acceptance of a hypothetical parliamentary decision, and the policy acceptance of a case-study in a local school system. Or similarly, Hattke et al. (2020) researched the emotional response not to a policy decision but to bureaucratic red tape in an experimental setting. There are researches which have even set emotions as independent variables: Rodriguez-Sanchez et al. (2018) researched the role of emotions and trust as on the acceptance of a single policy-decision. Still, the focus on the bridge between emotions and democratic implementation processes can be yet further developed.

Hence, developing on the findings of the just mentioned papers, the precise focus of this study is to further understand individual emotional responses to democratic decision-making processes. As it is located in the line of these mentioned researches and disciplines, this paper is innovative because of the specific characteristics the chosen case-studied has offered. The research studied the emotional reactions of young individuals to the lockdown imposed by the Dutch government on the 19th of December 2021. It is a policy decision taken in an emergency context, with severe implications for the wellbeing of citizens beyond the acceptance or favouring of the policy: “Even in this emergency circumstance, or especially in this emergency circumstance, we neglect mental health at our peril and to our long-term detriment” (Cullen et al., 2020).

By selecting a young population group, the paper seeks to investigate what are the reactions of a group which is often seen as being more socially active and thus one of the most restricted (to be tested). Young people needed to adapt habits and reconsider their social network meetings. It is a group which is expected to contain more policy losers than policy winners as well as less level of policy acceptance in comparison with other social groups. Furthermore, this population group, concretely young students ranging from 18 to 25 years old, is expected to belief in assumptions undermining the threat of the disease. Besides, as this paper will show, the targeted group presents sustained believes such as: “the health danger of Covid-19 is not high”, “the best time of our lives is being sold” or “young people need the social contact in their development time and in a student environment”.

Hence, the main research question to answer is: *“how does the implementation of the lockdown by the Dutch government on the 18th of December influences the emotional reaction of a young student population?”* This causal research question sets to investigate different relationships. Taking the research from Esaiasson et al. (2017) as a starting point, five are developed public administration dimensions that are suspected to have an influence on emotional reaction. In a democratic responsiveness context, a mutual understanding between governors and politicians is first theorized to induce some sort of emotional reaction. Next to this, the political sustained believes by the individuals are as well an independent variables. Furthermore, the realisation of the personal preference as well as the majority’s preference is theorized as having an effect. Finally, the institutional trust the individual has on the overall administrative system is theorised to be as well relevant.

The following section will first dive into the micro and macro level foundations to after explaining the five just mentioned dimensions. Then, a methodological section explains the techniques and tools chosen for answering the research questions. Afterwards, a results section will present the outcomes of the methodological approach chosen. At the end, a conclusion section will discuss the findings of the present research.

The data was analysed after the coding outcomes of 29 interviews. The coding provided the necessary data for performing an statistical analysis with the statistical software SPSS on the basis of multiple regression analysis, the objective was to observe what influences the variation of emotional reactions. Additionally, some example quotes of the transcripts are used.

Theory

Micro-level processes.

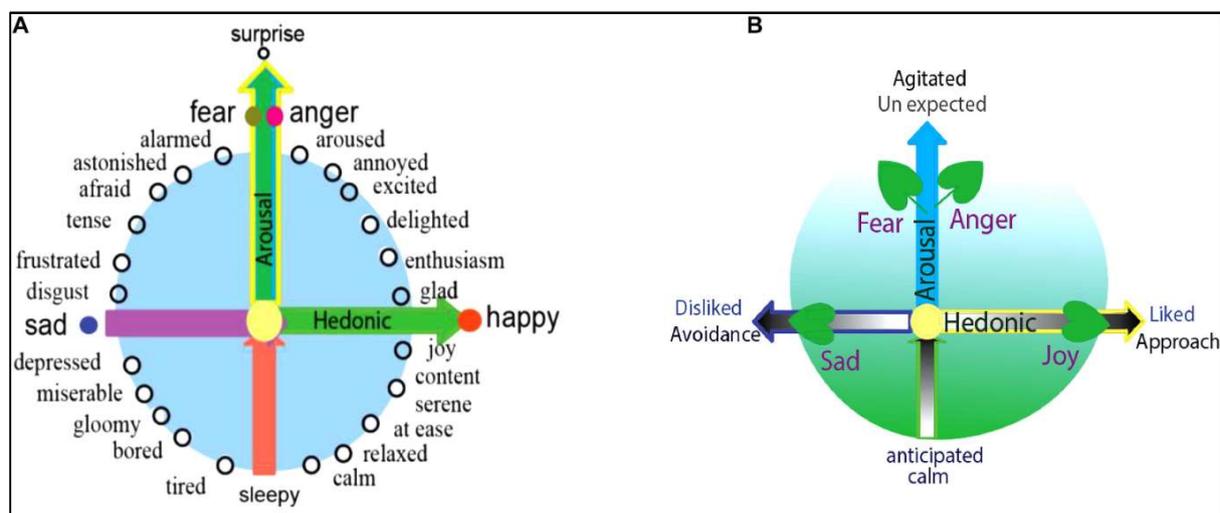
In order to understand how emotions are related to politico-administrative factors, an explanation of how emotions play a role in the evaluative process is first explained. Consequently, the “Three Primary Colour Model of Basic Emotions” (Gu et al., 2019) is in this section presented as the theoretical point of reference to study emotions.

In the language of social psychology, Eagly and Chaiken (2007) defined “attitude” as: “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour”. The entity can be a decision-making process. Four psychological elements involve the evaluative process, those are: thoughts, beliefs, feelings and emotions. These four elements have a direct effect on the degree of approval or disapproval of the entity (decision-making process). Tendency refers to the past experiences that incline to a positive or negative response. This is an important aspect due to the fact that in The Netherlands, a lockdown was already twice implemented (Confirmed cases, Government of The Netherlands, 2022), respondents previous experiences create already a belief towards the policy. These experiences have different intensity depending on the individual as well as different durations. Additionally, these experiences could be conscious or unconscious.

When an individual evaluates (a public decision), emotions play a role. The evaluation process together with the tendencies create an attitude. In line with Eagly and Chaiken (2007) argumentation, emotions together with other factors play a role in the evaluation of a decision-making process.

Further on the micro-level construction, Gu et al. (2019) proposed the so-called “Three Primary Colour Model of Basic Emotions”. This research sought to enhance two lines of historical theoretical frameworks of emotions. By investigating an insect, *Drosophila*, Gu et al. (2019) argued to be methodologically developing a new understanding of emotions that settled between the two frameworks. Acknowledging the fact that defining emotions has brought disagreement within the literature, Gu et al. (2019) presented a theory based on three different biological internal states: reward, punishment and stress. These produce four basic types of emotions: happiness, sadness, fear and anger. Happiness is due to reward and sadness due to punishment. When stress enters the equation, fear and anger appear. Being fear the product of punishment together with stress and anger the product of stress together with reward effects.

Figure 1. Obtained from: Gu et al. (2019) in the “Three Primary Colour Model of Basic Emotions”



The key conceptualization fact is that emotions have two dimensions. Those are the arousal and the hedonic parameters. In the evaluative processes, when an entity is unexpected, the arousal dimension located in the Y axis increases. When an entity is expected and we feel calmed and relaxed, the Y axis decreases. When an entity is liked, this increments the hedonic parameter, located in the X axis. When an entity is disliked, this decreases the hedonic parameter. The combination of these basic emotions generates higher emotions. In other words, combinations of different axis parameters create different other emotions.

Macro-level processes

Once explained the relationship between evaluative processes and emotions and having presented the Three Primary Colour Model of Basic Emotions, the following section is devoted to introducing the macro-level theoretical approach.

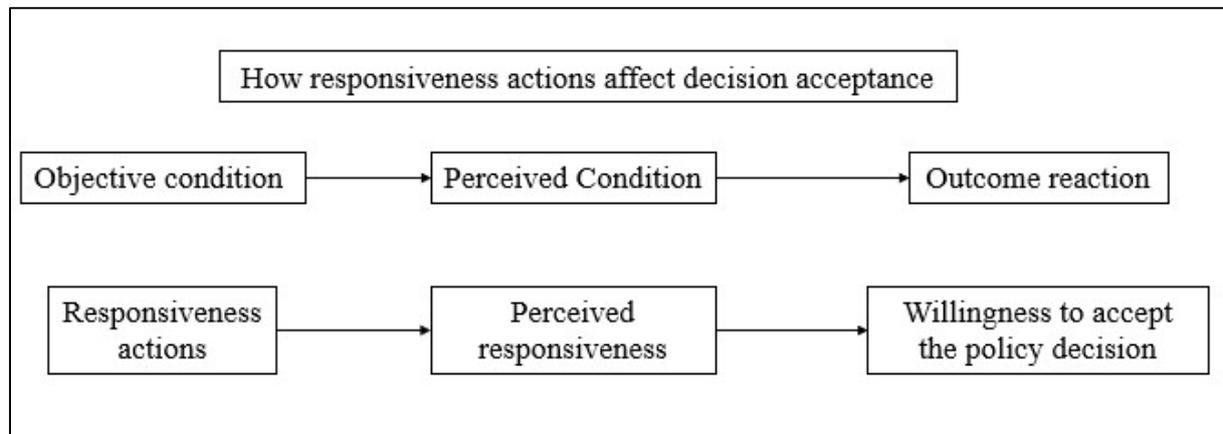
Democratic responsiveness is understood as a process in which politicians adopt the public policies citizens want (Powell, 2004). As an inevitable result, there are policy winners and policy losers. Citizens that support the decision-making outcome and citizens that do not. Still, how the decision is made matters. Adopted policies might not be the individual's preference but still be democratically, procedurally and responsibly made. Responsiveness thus can be divided in two dimensions. On the one hand, one aspect is centred on the individual's choice to favour or disfavour a certain policy, and on the other hand, one different aspect is centred on whether an individual comprehends and trusts the decision-making processes whereby the policy is concluded. This implies that citizens not agreeing with the outcome do not have to change their preference only because it was implemented (Estlund, 2009). Furthermore, a young population group might have different positionings regarding the agreement level of the policy. Still, the emotional responses that will result from both postulations are not known.

The study of Esaiasson et al. (2017) researched the so-called responsiveness-acceptance connection. This paper tested the claim following the theory of Dahl (1989), which states that citizens will accept policies independently of their preference towards it. But only if during the democratic process the politicians are responsive to citizens' wishes and views. The results Esaiasson et al. (2017) showed that responsiveness actions such as listening to citizens' demands or explaining the implementation of a policy are effective measures for responsiveness. However, much more conclusive is that policy losers were much less likely to accept that representatives have been acting responsibly. The policy preference of citizens biases and narrates the perceived responsiveness of the process. When you lose, it is hard to believe that you have been taken into account, that a fair process has taken place.

The study of Esaiasson et al. (2017) presented a three step process (figure 1) which starts with the objective "responsiveness of the decision-making process". It then further develops with the subjective "perception of the citizens". And lastly, concludes in the "(re)action, the willingness to comply with the policy decision". There are two conditions or linkages that need to be satisfied within the model. Primarily, the match between "the processes and mechanisms the public administration performs" with "the subjective understanding and individual's definition of responsiveness". And secondly, the importance level citizens could attach to "the democratic responsiveness perception" over the "policy outcome".

Having presented the theoretical macro-level lenses in the previous section, further in the chapter are the five dimensions explained. These are suspected to have an effect on citizens emotional reactions. Each dimension presents a sub-question and hypothesis that later are tested in the analysis section.

Figure 2. Replicated theoretical model from Esaiasson et al. (2017)



Dimension 1: communication between citizens and decision-makers.

Esaiasson et al. (2017) argue that “to listen” and “to explain” are better mechanisms rewarding responsiveness than “to adapt”. These three concepts are communication mechanisms; listening, referring to institutional actions to stay informed about the citizens and explaining to provide justifications for the policies adopted. Nevertheless, looking back at the causal model of Esaiasson et al., (2017), the authors argue that the first linkage is threatened by misinformation and misperception. Citizens are not informed enough about the actions and reasons behind the policy. There is a lack of communication, or the communication is not effective. Emotional reaction will be first dependent on an effective mutual understanding of the reasons behind the policy and its democratic processes that rest behind, being that responsive or not. Then, the emotional reaction will depend on the acceptance of this reasoning or not. The relevance of this dimension lies on the fact that different understandings of the reasons behind the policy and the acceptance of these, can lead to different emotional reactions.

Therefore, the first sub-question is: “When evaluating a decision-making process, what is the relationship between communication processes and emotional reaction?” Following Esaiasson et al. (2017) reasoning, four hypotheses develop from this sub question. First, the less individuals listen to the reasons given by the decision-makers for implementing the policy, the less positive (hedonic negative) and unexpected (arousal positive) the emotional reaction(s). Second, the less individuals are aware of the arguments the decision-makers give for implementing the policy, the less positive (hedonic negative) and unexpected (arousal positive) the emotional reaction(s) (referring to a match of arguments between what was reported by the decision-makers and with what the population group reports to have understood). Third, the less the individuals accept the policy decision, the less positive (hedonic positive) and more unexpected (arousal positive) the emotional reaction(s). Lastly, the less individuals complied to the policy, the more negative (hedonic positive) and unexpected (arousal positive) the emotional reaction(s). In general lines, emotional reactions are theorised to be negative and unexpected when the indicators of possible threats to the chain (Esaiasson et al., 2017) are confirmed.

Dimension 2: political identification.

Still in the first linkage, a further threat to Esaiasson et al. (2017) causal model are ideological biases. This refers to a wrong interpretation of the responsiveness action based on the positioning and policies of the decision-makers. In other words, to reject an action (or a policy implementation) that is responsive and sensible to citizens wishes only because this action or implementation has been implemented by certain actors with certain ideology. For example, Lodge and colleagues (2013) argued that: “citizens engage in motivated reasoning to maintain their valued beliefs”. These beliefs are, according to the authors: “unconscious mechanisms that govern memory accessibility”. This idea has been put forward and researched as well in the political psychology literature (Sloothuus and de Vreese, 2010, for

example). Ideological beliefs neglecting responsiveness actions find their origin thus in diverse unknown dimensions. In order to research a priori if respondents sustain beliefs that neglect the responsiveness actions, the political orientation of the individuals will be researched. Additionally, within the studied group, several sustained beliefs are expected to appear. This refers mainly to a “student” or “young” identity that can account for a biased understanding of the democratic implementation of the policy.

Consequently, the second sub-question follows as: “When evaluating a decision-making process, what is the relationship between consistent personal beliefs and emotional reaction?”, the hypothesis is that the further away in the political spectrum the individual and the government, the more negative (hedonic negative) and unexpected (arousal positive) the emotional reaction(s) to the policy.

Dimension 3: egotropic representation.

Wrtil and his colleagues (2022) put forward the term “egotropic representation”. That is the representation of your beliefs, of your policy preferences in the outcome of the decision-making process. In Esaiasson et al., (2017) terminology, the second linkage is threatened by instrumental precedence over responsiveness argumentation. Searching for unresponsive argumentation as a result of a loss in the decision-making outcome preference. These individuals could be referred to as “bad losers”. The fact that you are a “policy-loser” or a “policy-winner” (a realization of your policy preference in the outcome decision-making process) will thus affect your emotional reaction to the process.

Thus the third sub-question is: “When evaluating a decision-making process, what is the relationship between egotropic representation and emotional reaction?”. Two hypotheses are constructed: “Policy losers” will have more negative (hedonic negative) and unexpected (arousal positive) emotional reaction(s) than “policy winners”. The more students perceive they have been not taken into account in the decision-making process, the more negative (hedonic negative) and unexpected (arousal positive) the emotional reaction(s). The hypothesis theorises to negative and unexpected emotional reactions when indicators of threats to the responsiveness-acceptance chain are confirmed.

Dimension 4: sociotropic representation.

Further on the research of Wrtil et al. (2022), the authors theorize alongside with the just mentioned term “sociotropic representation”, additionally concerning the acceptance of the decision-making process not only by personal preferences (egotropic representation), but also by the realisation of the majority’s preference. Although there is limited research on sociotropic effects (Wrtil et al., 2022), the study of Arnesen et al. (2019) as well as Wrtil et al. (2022) found support for the claim that the realisation of the majority policy preference in the democratic responsiveness outcome affects the individual level of acceptance of the process. More precisely, this happens by the “consensus heuristic” mechanism: citizens value the opinion of the majority as “good” and “valid” only because it is the opinion of the majority. Emotional reactions will thus be dependent on the realization of the majority’s policy preference.

The postulation of this fourth sub-question is: “When evaluating a decision-making process, what is the relationship between the sociotropic representation and emotional reaction?”, the two hypotheses formulated are the following: the more individuals believe the majority’s preference is realized, the more positive (hedonic negative) and expected (arousal negative) the emotional reaction(s). The other hypothesis concerns the social network. The more the social network disfavours the policy the more negative (hedonic negative) and unexpected (arousal positive) the emotional reaction(s). Hypothesis of this dimension are theorized to contain negative and unexpected emotional reactions when the indicators of threats to policy acceptance are confirmed.

Dimension 5: political and institutional trust.

Rodriguez-Sanchez and colleagues (2018) researched the relationship between emotions and policy acceptance. Previous research investigated the relationship between rationality and acceptance or morality and acceptance. Nevertheless, the study of Rodriguez-Sanchez et al. poses itself as responding the acknowledged need by, for example, Perlaviciute et al. (2017) or Stoutenborough et al. (2013) to investigate the relationship between emotions and public acceptance, here emotions were conceptualized as variables that were affected by trust and thus on acceptance. This study found out that, on the one hand, the more individuals trusted institutions, the more positive the feelings arise. An on the other hand, that lack of trust has a negative effect on citizens emotional responses. Because institutional elements also play a role in the development of an evaluation, the existing perception and trust over the institutional setting enters likewise in the equation. In the same lines, “research shows that people who distrust politicians are less likely to credit them with good intentions (Hetherington, 2005).

The last sub-question formulated is: “When evaluating a decision-making process, what is the relationship between institutional trust and emotional reaction?”, here again two hypothesis develop. On the one hand, the more the individuals trust the government the more positive (hedonic positive) and more expected (arousal negative) the emotional reaction(s). On the other hand, the more individuals trust the public administration, the more positive (hedonic positive) and more expected (arousal negative) the emotional reaction(s). Hypothesis directions are constructed alongside the results of the previous sections.

Methodology section

The aim of the methodological section is to provide a handbook to reproduce the presented research. It also pretends to highlight the specific characteristics of the research. Namely its case studied and the chosen sample group. Therefore, first the specifications about the case-studied are presented. Next to that, the targeted group is described. Then, the focus lays on the forms of data collection used in this research. Afterwards, the coding of both the dimensions and emotions for the analysis are presented. At the end, the method of data analysis is discussed.

The Dutch lockdown of 19th of December 2021

Hereby the introduction to the case study chosen for the research, that is the implementation of a severe lockdown on the 19th of December 2021 to stop the spread of the Covid-19 disease by the Dutch government. A new government was democratically elected on the 17 of March 2021 (Nordsieck, 2022). However, the new coalition’s formation did not yet take office at the time of the policy implementation, yet this was formed of the same political parties. The government still on duties was composed by a coalition of four parties People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), a conservative-liberal party ; Democrats 66 (D66), a social liberal; Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) a social-conservatism; and Christian Union (CU), a social conservatism (Nordsieck, 2022). This government was the third in which Mark Rutte was the first minister.

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus, lockdowns, as well as similar policies, have been implemented in different parts of the world. From March 2020 up until December 2021, the Dutch government has fluctuated in implementations; from curfews to requiring facemasks at public transport (Confirmed cases, Government of The Netherlands, 2022). The government has stated that it has always been trying to stop the spread of the disease, a public health matter, taking into consideration other unintended related concerns such as ensuring a working health care system, the protection of vulnerable groups, individual mental health, domestic violence or economic growth (Wee et al., 2021). The more intrusive

the policy to stop the spread of the disease, the more unintended the consequences it resulted (OMT, 2022). This trade-off influenced the developments and evolution of the disease. In these decision-making processes regarding Covid-19, the policy-makers counted with the advises of the outbreak management team, a public coordinating office from the Dutch office of public health and environment (OMT, 2022).

Specifically on the 18th of December, the policy was implemented targeting a decrease in the reproduction number of the virus and ensuring functioning hospitals that could take up the high demand of patients. Besides, a good working health care system taking up patients with different typologies other than Covid-19 patients had to be ensured. So did the Dutch government argue on the 18th of December (Ministry of general affairs, 2021, December 21).

The study of Le et al. (2021), for example, found that sever psychological consequences go hand in hand with these types of policy implementations. Mainly anxiety, worrisome, disinterest, depression and adverse general health impact are some of the collateral negative consequences of lockdowns (Le, K., & Nguyen, M., 2021). These results go align with the research of Cullen et al. (2020) and other studies. Emotional reactions could be explained by these factors and not by the theorized prepositions.

Target group: a student population.

The target population chosen to analyse is a student populations, in an age range of between 19 and 25 years. This choice is motivated by the assumption that a young population will have a negative bias towards the implementation of this specific policy. In the terms of Eagly and Chaiken (2007), the “tendency” of this group is suspected to be negative. Alongside with a group identification in which they assume they have not been taken into account. Besides this student group is expected to perceive that the disease is not a real danger for them, and as a result thinking the policies adopted by the government are depriving their freedom, liberties and the time of their lives (Chen et al., 2020). This means that negative emotional reactions will be expected to be identified on the hedonic axis. Furthermore, as this was not the first lockdown experienced, the population is also assumed to not have high degrees in the arousal axis. That is the expectedness of such a decision in light of the disease developments. This means that emotions such as alarm or astonishment are not expected to be present (high arousal level emotions).

By selecting this group, the research can highlight what emotional reactions exist in populations that are expected to be in high disagree with the decision and not accept the. The study has selected 29 respondents from similar social networks from two universities in the same city of the Netherlands. This fact is not expected to influence the results of the research. The sample has been randomly selected and one of the variables also explored in the research concerns the social network’s opinion on the matter.

Data collection: interviewing.

The data collection has been performed through 29 interviews (Figure 3) in the time frame of May-June 2022 of two different educational institutions from the same city in The Netherlands. The emotional reactions as well as the different aspects that are theorised to induce these reactions are collected as a result of self-reported experiences and perceptions regarding the decision-making process. With interviews, rich information on the experiences and perceptions of young adults can be obtained. Contrastingly with surveys, for example, this technique allows for in-depth information about specific questions. The researcher has the opportunity to ensure each variable is correctly fulfilled. Furthermore, techniques that obtain data based on self-reported experiences are preferred over techniques where emotions are observed and classified with for example, facial expressions, heart rates or other physical indicators, as these are shown to have low levels of validity (Kaplan et al., 2012).

Figure 3. Text of the interview scheme.

Interview scheme
1. Could you provide a brief introduction of yourself?
2. How do you remember the week before last Christmas?
3. Did you have a stressful time just before the Christmas break?
4. How did you experience the lockdown implemented December 19th?
5. Have you previously had Covid-19?
6. Was this lockdown different for you than the other lockdowns? How did your experiences differ?
7. Did you expect such a lockdown to be implemented?
8. How did you emotionally feel? Did it have a big impact on your wellbeing?
Dimension 1: communication and understanding.
9. What reasons did the Dutch government give for implementing the lockdown?
10. Do you think these reasons are sufficient for implementing a lockdown?
11. Did you comply to the rules?
Dimension 2: political values.
12. Did you vote on the last elections for any political party which is now on the Dutch government?
13. Which political party would you identify with at the moment?
Dimension 3: egotropic representation.
14. Did you agree on the measures taken by the Dutch government?
15. Do you think you your interests and opinions were taken into account in the decision-making process?
Dimension 4: sociotropic representation.
16. Do you think the majority of the Dutch citizens wanted such a policy?
17. What was the opinion of your closer friends and family regarding the lockdown?
Dimension 5: institutional trust.
18. How would you describe your trust to the Dutch government?
19. How would you describe your trust to the Dutch public institutions?
Confirmation and identification of the basic emotions.
1) Reflecting on your feelings and experiences, did you feel happiness or sadness when the policy was implemented? Or did you rather experience both?
2) Reflecting on your experience, did you feel fear or anger when the policy was implemented? Or did you rather experience both?

The interview is designed so that in the beginning the first questions are recalling what the individual was doing in the time-frame of the policy implementation. Indirectly, some questions are already here studying emotions and perceptions (questions 3), 4), 6) and 8)). After, the dimensions are investigated, and at the latest stage, emotions and perceptions are examined. After a first trial interview, several questions and variables were added to the list. Those are 5), 7) and 11) and will be discussed in the two following sections. Each interview has accordingly been transcript using the software Amberscript. These are also attached in the appendix.

Coding of the different dimensions.

All the variables of each dimension have five different values. The only exception is dimension 2 which is investigating the political identification of the respondents. Therefore, its according variable is nominal and includes all political parties self-reported by the respondents. All other dimensions' variables contain the values: "very low", "low", "neutral" or "middle", "high" and "very high".

In the first dimension, the variables listening, acceptance and compliance follow a similar criteria designed for its classification in terms of values. An example is to be seen at table 1. Further values,

labels and examples for dimension 1 but also for the rest are attached in the appendix under the research codebook. This codebook has been used to transfer the data from the transcripts to the statistical program used for testing the different hypothesis.

Table 1. Coding scheme for the variable “listening”.

Values	Label	Example
1)Very low	No recall and no interest	“I am not very familiar with Dutch politics, to be honest” (Appendix 15, min. 6:54)
2)Low	Not listened but no active reason for it	“I do not remember, but probably the cases were going up” (Appendix 4, min 2:24)
3)Middle	Somewhat listened	“busy hospitalizations, making sure the hospitals had a manageable capacity” (Appendix 6, min 6:54)
4)High	Grasped main message	“... it was because of Omicron... it was spreading so fast, especially in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Groningen... they did not have the capacity in the hospitals” (Appendix 11, min. 12:01)
5)Very high	Total recall of the message	“...to make use of the capacity in the hospitals... to make sure there were intensive care spots for COVID patients... to protect society from a disease... protect health system... it was for the uncertainty in the new variant” (Appendix 7, min. 06:15)

Still on the variables at dimension 1, concerning the match between what individuals believe and what the explanations were for implementing the specific policy studied (obtained from: Ministry of general affairs, 2021, December 21) is the variable “understanding”. For dimension three and four, regarding the confirmation of personal as well as majority’s preference in the policy outcome, the “very low” label accounts for a complete mismatch of policy preference. The “very high” value is referring to a complete match between policy preferences. These (mis)matches are mainly based in terms on how the individuals argue their response. This accounts as well for the variable “perception of having been taken into account in the decision-making process” (dimension 3). Finally, dimension five is classifying the answers in terms of “very low” when it contains a total rejection of the organization, and “very high” if the answer contains high messages of trust to the system.

Furthermore there are two variables not included in a dimension. These were later added. In particular these variables are investigated in question 5) and 7). They are exploring whether the respondent did or did not have Covid-19 previously and whether the student did or did not expect such a policy to be implemented at that time. The latter variable is construed following the same logic as the variables from the dimensions. With five values ranging from “very low” to “very high” (see codebook). Moreover, several notations on previous relevant experiences with Covid-19 were noted for the analysis. Additionally, pre-existing conditions such as mental illnesses, or high levels of pre-existing conditions during the time of the implementation were as well notated but not coded.

Coding of emotions

When it comes to emotions, these were coded in line with the Circumflex of Gu et al. (2019). Feelings have as well been noted (e.g. loneliness). Each emotion identified in the interviews has been given a separate variable. The four basic emotions (Gu et al., 2019) are directly asked to the respondent in the last two questions. During the interviews, a total of 11 other different emotions were at least once identified. These emotions mainly appeared in the first section, or at the end of the interview as a result for explaining that one of the four basic emotions was not experienced but a similar one (e.g., not anger but frustration). Each emotion has 6 values. If the respondent does not mention the particular emotion, then it is valued as “no emotion identified” (Table 2). Similarly to the different variables in the dimensions, five values have been attached to the intensity in which the emotion is experienced (Table 2).

Table 2. Coding scheme for the differet emotional reactions”.

Value	Label	Example
No emotion identified	Emotion Y no identified in the responses of R	-
Very low	Emotion identified but R does not explain the source	“Fear not so much. Anger, maybe.” (Appendix 5, min. 8:53)
Low	Emotion identified, vague explanation of the source of the emotion	“No fear, but I was a little bit angry the last time they said we needed to go into lockdown.” (Appendix 23, min. 10:09)
Mid	Emotion as well as source identified clearly identified	“...it was quite hard to keep in contact with a lot of friends that are not as close, which definitely made the circle of friends around smaller, which has also contributed to the feeling of loneliness...” (Appendix 15, min. 4:17)
High	Emotion identified as well more than one source. Metnions more then once the emotion	“I was worrying about the general population with their own shop here and there and that was closed for months and months...” (same respondant) “ I was worried about the population in general, but my own mental health issues were like, okay at that time” (Appendix 29, min. 14:23)
Very high	Emotion identified. Explains the soruces. More than once identified. Explains consequences of emotion	“Really a lot of frustration because of the policies and people who were just copying with what the government was saying and never thought something could be wrong” (same respondant) “... that indirectly impacted me because I could not see anyone because they followed the rules. And that was a little bit frustrating at least...” (Appendix 14, min. 6:11)

Data analysis

Data is analysed using inferential statistics methods. Different multiple regression analysis models as well as different tests alongside this statistical process were used to test the different theoretical propositions this paper is proposing. Exemplifying some of the relationships between variables, quotes from the transcripts have been added to the different sections of the analysis. The statistical software SPSS was used to perform the different multiple regression analysis.

Results

This section aims to present the findings of the paper. The aim is to investigate in which intensity and direction the different dimensions affect emotional reactions in both the hedonic and the arousal axis. This was accomplished by testing the different hypothesis. In other words, this section is presenting the analysis of the different subquestions. First, a section devoted to the description of the sample data is presented. Second, an explanation of the different models of emotions used for each dimension is explained. Third, a general analysis is put forward and finally, each dimension has its own section answering its subquestion.

Descriptive sample data

Table 3 represents the descriptive population of the sample. When it comes to the variable “sex”, 62% of the respondents are male as well as 62% of the respondents are reporting to come from The Netherlands. The mean average age of the sample is close to 22 years. Related to study programmes, 44% of the sample is studying politics and public administration, 20.7% of the sample is studying communication science, 6.9% is studying psychology and the rest of the sample contains respondents which are studying a type of engineering, health sciences or art studies. Thus, a major part of the sample is following a course in social sciences. The Covid-19 variable explains whether the individual had the disease before or not: 55% did have the disease before.

However, the just mentioned variables are controlled and do not present a significant effects on the results presented alongside the research. Besides, the mean duration of one single interview is 13.94 minutes. In that time, on average there were close to four emotions identified by respondents. There is no significant relationship between duration of the interview and emotions identified. This eliminates a possible bias towards the number of identified emotions by time spent with the individual, which could have problematized the data collection of the paper.

The variables that were constructed with the values “very low”, “low”, “middle” or “neutral”, “high” and “very high” were converted into a scale variable. Concretely, these variables are “policy expectedness” and the rest of the variables from the dimensions (excluding dimension 2, see codebook). To each value it was attached a numeric expression. Starting with “very low” into a 1, “low” into a 2, “middle” or “neutral” into a 3, “high” into a 4, and “very high” into a 5.

In dimension one, the mean listening score of the sample was of 2.41. The average score population is between respondents who did not listened to the government explanations and individuals that somewhat listened to the explanations. For compliance, the mean score is a bit higher (2.96), in the middle of individuals that committed minor infringements and major infringements. Understanding and acceptance are both above the middle value. For the understanding variable, this means that the average respondent is stating two or more than two arguments the government gave for implementing the lockdown. Meanwhile, for acceptance, the mean respondent is in between two values: individuals arguing in both directions and individuals arguing in little intensity for the acceptance of the policy. This last fact is important due to the failed expectance of finding a high degree of non-acceptance.

Dimension two is composed of a single nominal variable which identifies the political party the respondent reported to associate with. The results show the identification of students with four major

political parties and a relative significant big score for individuals that cannot identify themselves with any political party. Hereby, 31% of the students identify themselves with the political party “groenlinks”, 24.1% with one of the political parties that composes the government (either “VVD” or “D66”), 20.7% of the population associates with the political party “Volt”, 20.7% did not identify themselves with any political party and 6.9% with other parties in the legislature not within the government.

Table 3. Unstandardized descriptive coefficients of the random sample.

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Duration of the interview	5.45	24.44	13.94	4.18
Respondent's sex	.00	1.00	.38	.48
Age of respondent	19.00	25.00	21.76	1.56
Nationality	.00	1.00	.38	.48
Year of study	1.00	7.00	2.93	1.62
Policy expectedness*	1.00	5.00	3.40	1.39
Covid-19	.00	1.00	.44	.50
Listening	1.00	5.00	2.41	1.32
Compliance	1.00	5.00	2.96	1.40
Understanding	1.00	5.00	3.38	1.12
Acceptance	1.00	5.00	3.24	1.43
Agreement level	1.00	5.00	3.17	1.44
Taken into account perception	1.00	5.00	1.86	1.27
Majority's preference	1.00	5.00	2.07	1.31
Social network agreement*	1.00	5.00	2.60	1.28
Trust government*	1.00	5.00	3.12	1.24
Trust public institutions*	1.00	5.00	4.04	.96
Number of emotions identified	1.00	7.00	3.86	1.21
Anger (17)	.00	5.00	1.58	1.74
Annoyance (5)	.00	5.00	.72	1.62
Boredom (6)	.00	4.00	.48	1.07
Disappointment (1)	.00	4.00	.14	.74
Discouragement (2)	.00	4.00	.20	.82
Emptiness (4)	.00	4.00	.38	1.01
Fear (10)	.00	5.00	1.03	1.70
Frustration (17)	.00	5.00	2.07	2.10
Happiness (23)	.00	5.00	2.10	1.61
Indifference (2)	.00	5.00	.31	1.16
Loneliness (3)	.00	5.00	.28	1.00
Relax (1)	.00	3.00	.10	.56
Sadness (16)	.00	5.00	1.72	.93
Stagnation (1)	.00	5.00	.17	.93
Worrisome (4)	.00	5.00	.51	1.35
Valid N = 29*				

Notes: in variable, sex 0 is referred to men and 1 to women. Nationality value 0 is refers to Dutch and 1 to non-Dutch. In the variable “Covid-19”, the value 0 refers to individuals did not have the disease before the implementation and 1 to individuals who did. *N is not 29 in variables: expectedness. (N = 27), social network agreement level (N = 27), trust government (N = 26) and trust institutions (N = 26). Between parenthesis, next to each emotion the number of R with value more than 0 is expressed.

Coming to dimension 3 is composed of two variables: the level in which individuals agree with the policy implementation and the degree to which student perceive they have been taken into account in the decision making process. On the one hand, the mean value for agreeing with the policy is of 3.17, meaning that the average respondent is arguing in both directions, for and against the implementation of the policy. This is further decomposes the assumption that a young population is strongly not agreeing

with the policy implementation. On the other hand, there is a low mean score for the perception of having been taken into account in the decision making process. That is of 1.86, the mean student is perceiving it is not taken into account with a strong, little or no argumentation for this positioning.

The descriptive information about the sociotropic representation dimension (4) shows that an average population (2.07) is believing that a majority of a Dutch inhabitants was not in favour of the policy implementation. Moreover, individuals report on average that they perceive their social network to be in between the middle of two values: agreeing for the implementation of the policy and not agreeing for the implementation of the policy (2.60). On average, individuals perceive their social network disagrees more than the respondent itself does.

The last dimension, concerning the trust to the government and public institutions, shows that generally there is a high degree of trust to both entities. On average, it is a lower score for the government, with a value of 3.12, meaning that on average individuals argue for and against trust and distrust regarding the government. And when it comes to the Dutch public institutions, the mean score is of 4.04, meaning that on average students do trust the public institutions.

The emotions that were identified most frequently were happiness, frustration, anger and sadness. Despite asking directly for the fear emotion and being it one of the basic emotions (Gu et al., 2019), this one was lower identified than the other emotions (10 times identified compared to 23, 17, 17 and 16 respectively). The rest of the emotions were not more than 6 times identified in different respondents and frustration was unexpectedly more frequently identified.

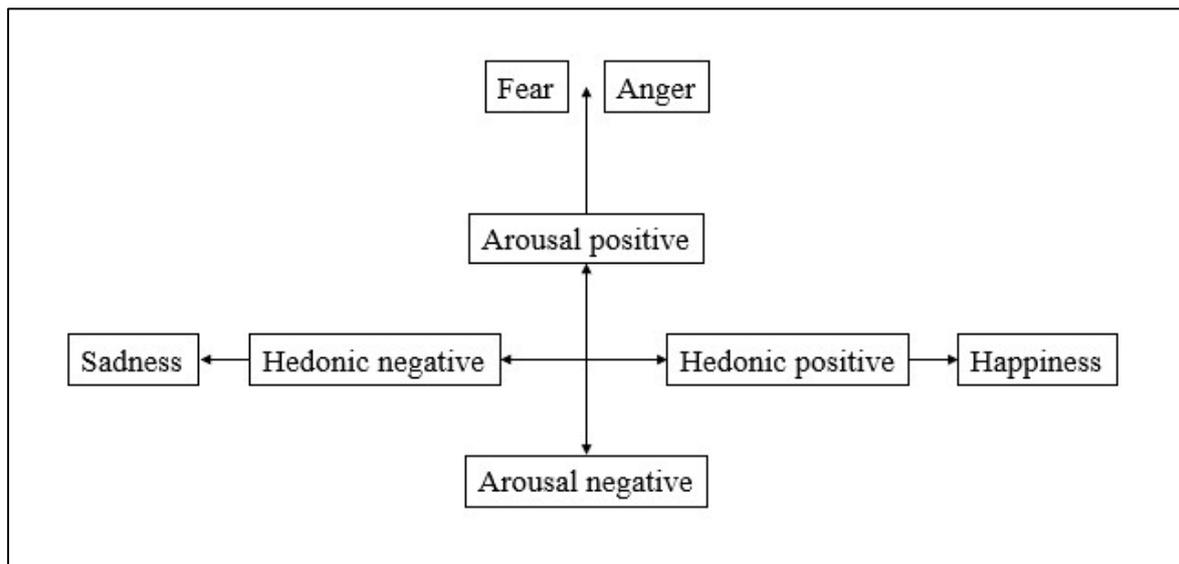
Modelling the variables

All independent variables that are modelled are standardized. This is done in order to be able to compare the different regression analysis. Concerning the political identification variable in dimension 2, each single political party had a variable separately created (dummy variable). In that variable, the identification of the corresponding political party was attach the value 1, for everything else, the value was 0. As a result, the research can test the difference between the government parties and the other parties respondents identify themselves with.

The dependant variables were also standardized. The different hypothesis formulated expect a positive or negative direction in both axis (arousal and hedonic). In order to test these directions, each hypothesis is being investigated in its relationship between the independent variable and the four basic emotions according to Gu et al. (2019). Because frustration was unexpectedly as well reported, this variable is also investigated. In the hedonic parameter, on the one hand, a significant positive relationship between the independent variable and happiness – or a significant negative relationship between the independent variable and sadness – will contribute to a positive hedonic parameter. On the other hand, a significant positive relationship between the independent variable and sadness – or a significant negative relationship between the independent variable and happiness – will contribute to a negative hedonic parameter. When it comes to the arousal parameter, a significant positive relationship between the independent variable and either fear or anger will contribute to a positive arousal parameter. The absence of a significant relationship or a negative one, will contribute to a negative arousal parameter (figure 4).

Therefore, two scale variables have been constructed: that is the hedonic and the arousal variables. As the data collection procedure identified more than the four basic emotions, these two variables are modelled with the objective of including emotions such as for example frustration in the models. By doing so, the research strengthens the consistency of the results. In order to construct these two scale variables, emotions have been sum up depending on their location inside of the circumplex of Gu et al. (2019).

Figure 4. Modelling the Circumplex of Gu et al. (2019)



On the one hand, the hedonic variable is composed of the following emotions, having a positive direction are: happiness, annoyance, relax and annoyance. Besides, defined by a negative direction are: fear, boredom, disappointment, discouragement, emptiness, exhaustion, frustration, loneliness, sadness and worrisome. On the other hand, the arousal variable excludes in its construction the emotions sadness and happiness as they represent the middle of the parameter (value 0). Nonetheless it is composed of the following variables. With a positive direction are the emotions: anger, fear, and frustration. With a negative value are boredom, emptiness, exhaustion, indifference, relax and stagnation (figure 1).

General model

Table 4 shows the standardized relationships between all independent variables used across the dimensions with the four basic emotions as well as the two constructed scales. In this section the table presented is discussed as well as further assumptions from the theories used in the research.

Table 4. Standardized regression coefficients of the general model (all factors).

	Happiness	Sadness	Anger	Fear	Hedonic	Arousal
(constant)	.071	-.105	-.037	.024	.233	.084
Listening	-.144	.149	-.085	.331	-.296	.094
Understanding	.021	-.277	.550	.255	-.229	.338
Acceptance	-.613*	-.365	-.016	.213	.069	.143
Compliance	.014	-.159	.145	.174	-.162	-.250
Volt	.345	-.328	-.210	.343	-.285	.184
Groen-links	.551	-.362	.189	.460	.322	.350
Other parties	.252	-.129	-.014	.020	.190	-.315
Agree with policy	.764*	.240	.202	-.360	.642	-.181
Taken into account	.196	-.309	-.049	.224	.007	.312
Majority preference	.380	.343	-.173	-.189	-.035	-.583*
Social network	-.429*	.206	-.350	-.158	-.288	-.190
Political trust	-.413	.089	.181	.249	.007	.012
Administrative trust	.209	.159	-.253	.124	-.037	.313
R square	.65	.38	.42	.29	.47	.55
N = 26						

Note. * P-value <0.05

Six multiple regression analysis were performed. The sample assumptions for performing a regression analysis are first investigated. Normality is checked with Shapiro-Wilk tests. The results express that the assumption is violated for most variables (p -values > 0.05). When further investigated, the plots between expected and observed values show figures in which the succession of values goes around the diagonal line. No drastic deviations were found for any variable. Further, the residuals and predicted values were plotted on a scatterplot ensuring equally distributed models, all have an homoscedastic form. Linearity is therefore moderately assumed.

The last assumption concerns multilinearity. This is investigated with two procedures. First, variance inflation factors are observed. Values higher than 5 are problematic. When investigated, no value exceeds 4. This contributes to the assumption of not having correlated factors. Further investigating the assumption, all factors were correlated with each other. The Pearson-correlation test showed significant correlations (P -value < 0.01) between the following variables: understanding and acceptance .64 and acceptance and agree with policy .69. These correlations imply that the results of these factors are compromised.

Three equations are not strongly explaining the variance in emotional reaction(s) to the policy implementation, the r squares do not exceed 0.42. Those are the emotions of sadness, anger and fear. The two constructed scales show r -squares round the 0.50, therefore the same conclusion can be extracted; the models do not strongly explain the variation in the emotional reaction(s). Nevertheless there is a significant negative relationship (-.583) between the arousal scale and the believe of the majorities' positioning towards favouring the policy. This means that the more individuals believe that a majority of citizens wanted a lockdown, the more calming and relaxing the emotions students felt. This relationship is significant with an alpha value of 5%, meaning that there is a 5% possibilities that this results do not account for the general population. It is further analysed in dimension 4.

The model that is the strongest explaining variance in the emotional reaction(s) is the one of happiness (R -square = .65). In it, three significant relationships (P -value < 0.05) can be found. The more individuals accept the policy decision, the less happy they are. Furthermore, the more the individuals agreed with the policy, the happier they were. These results will be further investigated as they correlate with one another, thus these are not yet confirmed. Lastly, the more the individuals' social network agrees with the policy, the less happy individuals are.

Because frustration was identified 17 times, it is also tested with the independent variables from the different dimensions. The results show that the model has an R -square of .50 and that there are no significant relationships in it.

Furthermore, the assumption according to Gu et al., (2019) is that the arousal axis increases when an entity is not expected. In the different sets of interview, one question was concerning whether the individual did or did not expect the policy to be implemented at that time (see codebook). In order to investigate if this argumentation persists in the expectance of a policy decision, it is tested with several regression analysis. The results show that neither fear nor anger is explained by policy expectedness (P -values of .638 and .455). Moreover, the scale variable arousal is not explained by policy expectedness (P -value of .222)

In the following sections the different subquestion are answered. In order to strengthen the results of the paper, each dimension has been further tested with its different independent variables to the four basic emotions and the two scale variables. The theoretical prepositions presented in the research have guided five different dimension. By modelling each of them separately the paper can observe as well whether there are differences between dimensions. Besides, it can check how the results persist when the dimensions are treated separately. Additionally, two correlation relationships are found that need to be further investigated.

The statistical models presented in the following sections generally met the assumptions of multiple regression analysis, threats to these assumptions are mentioned in the discussions of the models. The process of answering each subquestion not only takes into account the models, which have a low R-squared, but also descriptive information and example quote from the interview transcript.

Dimension 1: communication between citizens and decision-makers.

Table 5 shows 6 multiple regression analysis between the four conceptualized hypothesis for dimension 1 and the different emotions. The subquestion to answer is: “When evaluating a decision-making process, what is the relationship between communication processes and emotional reaction?”.

Table 5. Standardized regression coefficients of dimension 1, communication dimension.

	Happiness	Sadness	Anger	Fear	Hedonic	Arousal
(constant)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Listening	.349	-.135	.036	.220	-.009	-.033
Understanding	-.171	.179	.376	.057	.044	.076
Acceptance	.205	-.310	.016	.204	.160	.211
Compliance	-.198	.066	.295	.094	.005	-.211
R square	.10	.10	.13	.10	.03	.06
N = 29						

Note. * P-value <0.05

At the time the lockdown was implemented, there are no statistical significant results found in the relationship between the degree to which individuals listened to the arguments behind the implementation of the policy and emotions reported by the individuals. Further on the hypothesis, there are no statistical significant results found in the relationship between the level of understanding of the reasons behind the policy implementation of individuals and their emotions reported at the time the lockdown was implemented. There are also not statistical significant results found in the relationship between individuals acceptance of the reasons behind the policy implementation and the emotions reported by the individuals at the time the lockdown was implemented. Lastly, there are no statistical significant results found in the relationship between individuals compliance to the rules and the emotions reported by the individuals at the time the lockdown was implemented.

When tested for explaining frustration, these four factors do not present significant relationships, the R-squared of that model is of .13. Concerning the acceptance variable, which was significant in the general model, the results hereby prove to be not consistent with the previous model: the coefficient presents a change of direction. As this variable correlated with policy acceptance in the general model it is concluded that it is not a significant effect for explaining emotional variation.

The population on average did not listen to the arguments (2.28) (e.g. “*During the last phases I remember that I did not watch the press conferences at all*”. Appendix 27, min. 10:22). Also, it did present at least two or more arguments matching the explanations for the policy implementation (3.38) (e.g. “*I do not know most of them because I did not follow. But I guess probably rising numbers and the hospitality rate and that they did not want to have so much pressure on the on the health system*”. Appendix 22, min. 7:22). Listening and understanding correlate significantly (Pearson’s correlation 0.64, P-value < 0.001), strengthening the theoretical model of Esaiasson et al. (2017) There is also a significant negative correlation (Pearson’s correlation -.43, P-value <0.05) between acceptance and compliance to the policy. Besides, the population is confirmed to not have a skewed from in the variables acceptance and compliance, condition it was first expected.

To sum up, the final answer to the subquestion is that there is no significant relationship between communication processes and emotional reactions. All hypothesis cannot reject the status quo and cannot confirm the theorized directions and relationships. The factors in the direction in which

Esaiasson et al. (2017) chain of responsiveness is threatened do not explain the variance in emotional reactions.

Dimension 2: political identification.

The following table (6) is presenting the statistical results of the subquestion: “When evaluating a decision-making process, what is the relationship between consistent personal beliefs and emotional reaction?”. A regression analysis was performed between a set of dummy variables and the different emotional conceptualizations.

Table 6. Standardized regression coefficients of the dimension 2, political identification.

	Happiness	Sadness	Anger	Fear	Hedonic	Arousal
(constant)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Volt	.554*	-.291	-.276	.162	-.086	.084
Groen-links	.471	-.388	.000	.169	.225	.216
No identification	.329	-.161	-.163	-.123	.197	-.207
R square	.22	.10	.07	.08	.08	.13
N = 25						

Note. Reference category: respondents identifying with political parties forming the government.
*P-value <0.05

The parties forming the government (identified in the respondents answers: VVD and D66) are the reference category of the regression analysis. The coefficients show the difference in emotional reactions between respondents identifying themselves with the parties forming the government and the rest of the political identifications. The two major parties identified between the sample population were “Volt” and “Groen-links”. A big sample population does not identify themselves with any political party (20.7%). The hypothesis focuses on the distance between ideologies. The further away in the political spectrum the more negative and unexpected the emotional reaction.

Volt considers itself a social liberal political party while Groen-links considers itself a party in the realm of green politics. Volt is thus further away than Groen-links (Nordsieck, 2022)

The results show that there is one significant result (P-value <0.05). Individuals identifying themselves with the political party of “Volt” experienced more positive emotions than the population politically identifying themselves with the political parties forming the government. For the respondents identifying themselves with the party “Groen-links” the P-value is of .054 and it has a similar positive coefficient as the one from “Volt”. The direction of the results is contrary to the one of the hypothesis. For the rest of the emotions there are no significant results and there are no models explaining more than the 13% of the variation in emotional reactions. Also, frustration and these factors show no significant relationships, the model explains 14% of the variance.

Based on this results the formulated hypothesis cannot be confirmed. The answer to the subquestion is that there are no significant relationships found. Further on the transcripts analysis, a group identification was confirmed. Sustained opinions such as: “I was angry... I would have wanted to experience more of this student time, especially in my first year” (Appendix 2, min. 1:48), “But then again, they shut down the whole university system for two years and they just expected us to do everything ourselves, we also need interaction. And I do not really think they kept that in mind.” (Appendix 5, min 5:07) or “Obese people who are also aging, above 70 or 75 plus and those were the people who experienced the least impacts of lockdowns. However, the ones who experienced the most impact were not even a targeted group. So in that sense it was shifted towards our generation. However, it was not even our problem, actually” (Appendix 14, min. 7:15) were identified. Respondents with those opinions reported emotions of frustration and anger.

Dimension 3: egotropic representation.

The subquestion dimension 3 answers is: “when evaluating a decision-making process, what is the relationship between egotropic representation and emotional reaction?” Hereby two hypothesis were constructed explaining how the variables modelled in this dimension would affect the emotional reaction. Table 7 presented the results of the tests.

Table 7. Standardized regression coefficients of dimension 3, egotropic representation.

	Happiness	Sadness	Anger	Fear	Hedonic	Arousal
(constant)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Agree with policy	.227	-.167	.193	.055	.350	-.038
Taken into account	.024	.061	.078	.191	-.180	.276
R square	.05	.02	.05	.04	.09	.06
N = 29						

Note. *P-value <0.05

The level to which individuals agreed with the policy implementation was tested with the different sets of emotions. It was expected that the more you did not agree with the policy, the less negative (hedonic negative and unexpected (arousal positive) the emotional reactions. The results of this model show no statistical significant results found between one’s policy preference and the emotions reported during the implementation of the lockdown. This was nevertheless confirmed in the general model.

When it comes to the feeling of haven been taken into account in the decision-making process, the regression analysis test found no statistical significant results found between one’s perception of haven been taken into account in the decision-making process and emotions reported at the time the policy was implemented. The hypothesis expected the same directions in the hedonic and arousal axis: more negative and unexpected emotions when one would agree less with the policy. Therefore, it cannot be confirmed. Frustration and these factors show no significant results and present a R-squared of .05. The results are consistent with the general model

In this dimension, the variable “taken into account” has a low mean population score. When this question was asked to the sample group, individuals identified with some of their interests. For example, “*I think that they did not listen enough to the economic side of the story, because there's more than only health of people*” (Appendix 7, min. 8:26) or “*No, I do not think so. I think especially the students, the younger population between 18 and 30, for those people it was I think really hard, during the corona pandemic, physically and mentally*” (Appendix 29, min. 9:41), which confirms again the self-identification of a young population group with several interests.

Moreover, a threat to the model of Esaiasson et al. (2017) is that individuals attach more value to the favouring of the policy then to the responsiveness chain. Meaning that: “When you lose, it is hard to believe that you have been taken into account and that a fair process has taken place” (Esaiasson et al, 2017). Both variables correlate with a significant Pearson coefficient of (P-value <0.05) .68.

To conclude, there is significant evidence that egotropic representation is related to emotional reactions. Following the general model, which explains better variation of emotional variance and the confirmation of the direction of the relationship with this model the paper concludes that the less an individual agrees with the policy the less happy one is.

Dimension 4: sociotropic representation.

Further on representation, dimension 4 investigates: “when evaluating a decision-making process, what is the relationship between the sociotropic representation and emotional reaction?”. To answer this question two variables were explored. Table 8 presents the results.

Table 8. Standardized regression coefficients of dimension 4, sociotropic representation.

	Happiness	Sadness	Anger	Fear	Hedonic	Arousal
(constant)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Majority preference	.221	.165	-.181	.077	-.187	-.199
Social network	-.234	-.016	-.174	-.142	-.082	-.186
R square	.12	.03	.05	.03	.05	.07
N = 27						

Note. *P-value <0.05

On the one hand, the variable “majority preference” ranked individuals in their perception of what the majority’s opinion is regarding the policy implementation. When tested for the variance in emotional reactions, this model shows no statistical significant results were found in the relationship between one’s perception of the majority’s policy preference and emotions reported during the implementation of the lockdown. In the general model, there is one significant coefficient. The more one believes the majority agrees with the policy, the more the unexpected the emotions. The hypothesis: the more individuals believe the majority’s preference is realized, the more positive (hedonic positive) and expected (arousal negative) the emotional reactions cannot be confirmed.

Furthermore, according to this model there is no statistical significant results found in the relationship between the policy preference of the respondent network and emotions reported during the implementation of the lockdown. Although the general model finds a significant negative relationship between the variable social network and happiness, this model does not confirm this results. Nevertheless, the regression model in which happiness is explained by social network had the highest R – squared of the table. Besides, the specific coefficient of -.234 is the strongest of the table. Contrastingly, frustration is not significantly explained by any of the

The study of Arnesen and his colleagues (2019) as well as Wratil et al., (2022) found support for the claim that the realisation of the majority policy preference in the democratic responsiveness outcome affects the individual level of acceptance of the process. Hereby the paper does not find any significant relationship between these variables when tested (P-value > 0.05).

Based on the results of the paper, it is concluded that there is slight relationship between the sociotropic representation and variation in emotional reactions. The more individuals believes the majority agrees with the policy, the more the unexpected the emotions. Furthermore, the more your social network agrees with the policy implementation, the less happiness you experience.

Dimension 5: political and institutional trust.

Lastly, dimension 5 is concerning trust and emotions. Precisely: “when evaluating a decision-making process, what is the relationship between institutional trust and emotional reaction?”. Two hypothesis are tested in this section regarding government but also administrative trust. Table 9 presented the results of these two tests.

Table 9. Standardized regression coefficients of dimension 5, political and administrative trust.

	Happiness	Sadness	Anger	Fear	Hedonic	Arousal
(constant)	-.029	.048	-.108	-.062	.053	-.077
Political	-.364	.191	.155	.018	.035	-.089
Administrative	-.060	.416	-.285	-.202	-.072	-.170
R square	.12	.10	.06	.02	.00	.03
N = 26						

Note. * P-value < 0.05

The results are consistent with the general model. There are no statistical significant results found in the relationship between one's trust to the institutions and government with emotions reported during the policy implementation. Frustration and these factors are not significantly related as well.

The descriptive scores showed high levels of political and institutional trust, especially for institutional trust. Regarding the subquestion, there is no evidence trust factors explain emotional variance.

Conclusion

The present research has provided further steps in the bridge between the study of the mind and public processes in a democratic setting. From a democratic responsiveness perspective, several dimensions were theorised to have an effect on the emotional reactions of a selected group of population. It was investigated how a decision made by people and for the was evaluated by people. Students were expected to have a big disfavour and non-acceptance level towards the policy. The results showed contrarily. The policy implementation chosen was a lockdown implemented in an emergency context. Situations where often the mental health is neglected (Cullet et al., 2020).

Three are the main conclusion of the paper. The hypothesis concerning situations in which variables in their direction and intensity challenged Esaiasson et al. (2017) model, showed to not explain emotional reactions variation, expect for in two dimensions. First conclusion is that in dimension 3, individuals who agrees more on the policy implementation were happier than individuals who did not agree with the policy. Thus, above responsiveness-acceptance factor for explaining emotions, is that the (dis)favouring of the policy affects happiness of citizens. Second conclusion is that dimension 4 regarding sociotropic representation is related as well to the variation in emotional reactions. The more individuals believes the majority agrees with the policy, the more the unexpected the emotions. The more your social network agrees with the policy implementation, the less happiness you experience.

Third, as shown in some dimensions, a young population identifies with several group interests. This group perceives it is also not taken into account in the decision making process. And perceives it is being affected with consequences of the policy that are unnecessary for them. Respondents with those opinions reported emotions of frustration and angeriness. This contributes to dimension 2, which concerned the political ideology. However, the way in which the paper attempted to test this theoretical preposition failed in giving significant results.

The average respondent is arguing in both directions, for and against the implementation of the policy. The level of acceptance of the arguments behind the policy is also in the middle. These two variables highly correlate with each other. A possible explanation as well as threat to Esaiasson et al. (2017) model is that; because an individual is not favouring the policy implementation, although this was democratically, responsibly made, and sensible to the citizens' wishes, the individual refuses and thus not accepts the policy just because it was not the preferred one. Some respondents acknowledge the decision making process although not favouring the decision: "I think there was a slight majority for lockdowns, but that is also because the majority of the population of the Netherlands is a little bit aging" (Appendix 14, min. 9;21). Further research can investigate if such a relationship exists, and if these has an emotional reaction to a democratic policy implementation. Although the results of this study do not support such a conclusion.

Further research could use more sophisticated methods for the analysis. The sample had a low number of respondents that can be increased to see the consistency of the results across different populations. Generalizations can be made to populations with the similar descriptive characteristics. Because the different prepositions about finding a population not agreeing and not accepting the decision were not met. The results of the analysis can be generalized to the whole population, expected to have a normal

distribution in these two variables. Lastly, the results of this research can be compromised as some of the multiple regression analysis assumptions were not met strongly met.

Codebook

Variable	Values	Label	Example
Dimension 1			
Listening	1)Very low	No recall and no interest	“I am not very familiar with Dutch politics, to be honest” (Appendix 15, min. 6:54)
	2)Low	Not listened but no active reason for it	“I do not remember, but probably the cases were going up” (Appendix 4, min 2:24)
	3)Middle	Somewhat listened	“busy hospitalizations, making sure the hospitals had a manageable capacity” (Appendix 6, min 6:54)
	4)High	Grasped main message	“... it was because of Omicron... it was spreading so fast, especially in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Groningen... they did not have the capacity in the hospitals” (Appendix 11, min. 12:01)
	5)Very high	Total recall of the message	“...to make use of the capacity in the hospitals... to make sure there were intensive care spots for COVID patients... to protect society from a disease... protect health system... it was for the uncertainty in the new variant” (Appendix 7, min. 06:15)
Understanding	1)Very low	No argument	No respondents in this category.
	2)Low	One argument	“high COVID numbers” (Appendix 16, min 5:30)
	3)Middle	Two arguments	“I remember it was for older people... that there were not enough beds” (Appendix 28, line 11:29)
	4)High	More than two arguments	“the hospitals capacity... the pressure in the hospitals and the pressure on health of the society in general... there was a lot of uncertainty because of the new variant” (Appendix 20, line 14:47)
	5)Very High	Complete recall of the message	“...to make use of the capacity in the hospitals... to make sure there were intensive care spots for COVID patients... to protect society from a disease... protect health system... also, it was for the uncertainty in the new variant” (Appendix 7, min. 06:15)
Acceptance	1)Very low	No acceptance with strong argumentation	“No, I do not. Especially because there was a very clear targeted group for Corona: obese people who are also aging, above 70-75. These were the people who experienced the least impact of lockdowns. However, the ones who experienced the most impact were not even a targeted group” (Appendix 14, min. 7:15)
	2)Low	No acceptance without or little argumentation	“I do not think they had the right for such a lockdown... I think we got locked up because of the problems of other people (Appendix 2, min. 5:50)
	3)Middle	Argumentation for and against it	“as long as there is little or few people being harmed is this the way, yes... but this is not really taking into account people in problematic domestic relationships “(Appendix 9, min. 9:17)
	4)High	Acceptance without or little argumentation	“I do not really recall. But either way, I did not really care because I mean, I could not have made a better decision, so it was fine” (Appendix 8, min. 3:12)
	5)Very high	Acceptance with argumentation	“I think I would respond now differently than during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, but I definitely do see the necessity behind it. Even as someone who is not an elderly or a person at risk or has those people or like, I do not know, someone that is like highly risk averse. We have seen so many like bad news in the media. We have seen the numbers of people dying, the numbers of infections rising...” (Appendix 15, min. 7:20)
Dimension 3			
Agree policy	1)Very low	Not agreeing, with multiple and strong argumentation for it.	“The measures taken by the government were mostly because of the OMT. And I had a pretty big distrust in the OMT for the reasoning behind what role should be enforced. Because I did not believe the OMT looked at the whole picture... And I think that the government too blindly accepted their advice as

			if the advice were what would be best for the Netherlands...” (Appendix 3, min 8:45)
	2)Low	With no or little argumentation. Notions of little agreement.	“Not all of the measures. I would say they had the measure of locking everything down from 5:00 or 7:00 or something was a bit unreasonable. And also that the government changed the lockdown for infected people from like seven days to three days or five days or something without even testing if they are negative... It was a bit confusing and I do not think it was that effective.” (Appendix 12, min. 9:14)
	3)Middle	Argumentation in both ways	“Yes, but there were there were mistakes made. I trust the Government. But I know they have not handled things perfectly. And there are a lot of things that can be done better. But I am not like against the measures” (Appendix 1, min. 10:25)
	4)High	With low argumentation	“Yeah, I agree. It was a reasonable decision. I guess something had to be done and they did the right thing, in my opinion”. (Appendix 26, min. 9:51)
	5)Very high	With multiple and strong argumentation	“Yeah, definitely. I think that sometimes there were too little. I would like to say that they were not strict enough” (Appendix 11, min. 13:06)
Taken into account	1)Very low	Not taken into account, with multiple and strong argumentation for it	“No, no. I think that they did not listen enough to the economic side of the story, because there's more than only health of people. There is also the whole economic in here and Europe is really harmed by all these decisions in my in my opinion, that did not take that into account enough.” (Appendix 7, min. 8:26)
	2) Low	Not taken into account, with low or no argumentation	“No, I do not think so. No I did not get any form to fill in or, you know, I did not get to say what thought, you know?” (Appendix 18, min. 9:19)
	3) Middle	Argumentation for both sides	“Well, I did not really express my opinion in any way. But on the other hand, I do not think opinions should be taken into consideration. The action has to be taken and you know, some people might dislike it that they have to stay at home, but well, it is for their own good and good of others because maybe they will not get COVID...” (Appendix 26, min. 10:06)
	4) High	Taken into account with low or no argumentation	“Uh. Yes, I would say yeah” (Appendix 20, min. 18:14)
	5) Very high	Taken into account with multiple and strong argumentation	“Yeah. Well. Yeah. Of course, a government tries to take everything into account” (Appendix 17, min. 9:01)
Dimension 4			Dimension 4
Majority opinion	1)Very low	Believe majority is not agreeing with the policy with multiple argumentation	“No I do not think so... all those rails in the big cities with all those events coming up... you could see everywhere that Dutch people did not want this. (Appendix 28, min. 15:08).
	2)Low	Believe majority is not agreeing with the policy with not or brieve argumentation	“I think the majority did not want this lockdown again but could not do anything because the government decided anyway. I think most of the people would have said, let it be.” (Appendix 2, min. 8:39)
	3)Middle	Argumentation in both directions	“I do not know. I believe that in the first two lockdowns the majority of the Dutch people wanted that. I do not know how it was in the last lockdown. Maybe half, 50-50, I think.” (Appendix 20, min. 19:05)
	4)High	Believe majority is agreeing with the policy and brief argumentation for it	“I think the loudest minority did not want to. They really made themselves heard.” (Appendix 6, min. 9:36)
	5)Very high	Believe majority is agreeing with the	“Well, I think a lot of people scream: "no, no, we do not want a look down". But when you really think about it and have

		policy and strong argumentation for it	the pros and the cons, then I think a way more people would actually agree. They just have the wrong perspective, I guess.” (Appendix 17, min. 9:47)
Network	1)Very low	R believes her/his social network does not agree with the policy and strongly argues for it	“My family was very against it.” (Appendix 3, min. 10:59)
	2)Low	R believes her/his social network does not agree with the policy and does not argue or little for it	“My family is not here. And I doubt that they have such a problem with lockdown. So this one does not even really know because it is just a different system. As for my friends. No, they are not happy.” (Appendix 9, min. 11:41)
	3)Middle	R believes her/his social network sits in the middle or argues in both directions	“I think most of them stayed in the middle as well...” (Appendix 1, min. 12:45).
	4)High	R believes her/his social network agrees with the policy and does not argue or little for it	“I guess my closest friends and family they mostly agreed upon this.” (Appendix 10, min. 5:45)
	5)Very high	R believes her/his social network agrees with the policy and strongly argues for it	“Well, I think my close circle of friends, but also my family were very happy for regulations because all of us have people in our family that are at high risk to catch a bad way of COVID.” (Appendix 15, min 12:52)
Dimension 5			Dimension 5
Trust government	1)Very low	No trust with multiple argumentation for it	“Very nice that you ask. I think currently it is at the bottom. However, the bottom is getting deeper every time they are implementing new policies. I do not know where the border is.” (Appendix 14, min. 10:30)
	2)Low	No trust with little or no argumentation for it	“Medium to low. Because there was this scandal with the social help for poor children and families. Yeah, irregularities. And therefore my trust was not so high.” (Appendix 22, min. 11:19)
	3)Middle	Argumentation in both directions	“I would say I do not really care. If I am fully honest, I am just going to be here for hopefully three years if I pass everything and then I will be gone. I do not really pay taxes otherwise.” (Appendix 26, min. 11:31)
	4)High	Trust with little or no argumentation	“Sufficient. Yeah, I think they especially now with the government, we now have more trust in this government than the last one...” (Appendix 7, min. 11:17)
	5)Very high	Trust with multiple argumentation for it	“I think more than some people... I trust that the people try to get our best. And I trust that they are really trying to improve the process and stuff...” (Appendix 1, min 14:01)
Trust institutions	1)Very low	No trust with multiple argumentation for it	No respondents in this category.
	2)Low	No trust with little or no argumentation for it	No respondents in this category.
	3)Middle	Argumentation in both directions	“I think we have good healthcare. I do not like that they are cutting the budgets... You cannot live of €300 a month and then you still need to rent like more money and you need to loan more money...” (Appendix 5, min. 6:46)
	4)High	Trust with little or no argumentation	“I think it is pretty high. It is pretty sufficient.” (Appendix 10, min. 6:13)
	5)Very high	Trust with multiple argumentation for it	“I trust them a lot, I think 90%. But there are some changes needed in policies from the government.” (Appendix 25, min. 14:07)

Variable	Value	Label	Example
Emotion Y	No emotion identified	Emotion Y no identified in the responses of R	-
	Very low	Emotion identified but does not explain the source	"Fear not so much. Anger, maybe." (Appendix 5, min. 8:53)
	Low	Emotion identified, vague explanation of the source of the emotion	"No fear, but I was a little bit angry the last time they said we needed to go into lockdown." (Appendix 23, min. 10:09)
	Mid	Emotion as well as source identified clearly identified	"...it was quite hard to keep in contact with a lot of friends that are not as close, which definitely made the circle of friends around smaller, which has also contributed to the feeling of loneliness..." (Appendix 15, min. 4:17)
	High	Emotion identified as well more than one source. Mentions more than once the emotion	"I was worrying about the general population with their own shop here and there and that was closed for months and months..." (same respondent) "I was worried about the population in general, but my own mental health issues were like, okay at that time" (Appendix 29, min. 14:23)
	Very high	Emotion identified. Explains the sources. More than once identified. Explains consequences of emotion	"Really a lot of frustration because of the policies and people who were just copying with what the government was saying and never thought something could be wrong" (same respondent) "... that indirectly impacted me because I could not see anyone because they followed the rules. And that was a little bit frustrating at least..." (Appendix 14, min. 6:11)

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