

Are civically active youths prone to spreading misinformation? The role of perceived discrimination

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Research Questions

What are the temporal association of sharing misinformation online with online civic engagement, perceived discrimination, digital literacy and SES among European youth?

Theory

- more engaged people are also more likely to share misinformation online (Ahmed et al., 2023; Valenzuela et al., 2019)
- online civic engagement is seen as means of citizens' empowerment and democratization, while on the other hand, it can result in harmful effects for democracies (Tucker et al., 2017; Valenzuela et al., 2019)
- digital literacy can be associated both with online civic engagement and the sharing of misinformation (e.g., Kahne et al., 2012; Kim & Yang, 2016) – it is considered a protective factor against sharing misinformation

Theory

- Critical consciousness framework posits that more marginalized people can be more prone to critical reflections and taking action to address perceived inequalities and promote social change (Freire, 1970; Diemer et al., 2021)
- However, people, who perceive themselves as socially marginalized, are prone to share news indiscriminately (Jun & Johar, 2022)
- People with lower socioeconomic status are at higher risk of sharing misinformation online (Malik et al., 2023; Sun & Xie, 2024)

Concepts

Online civic engagement

Sharing misinformation

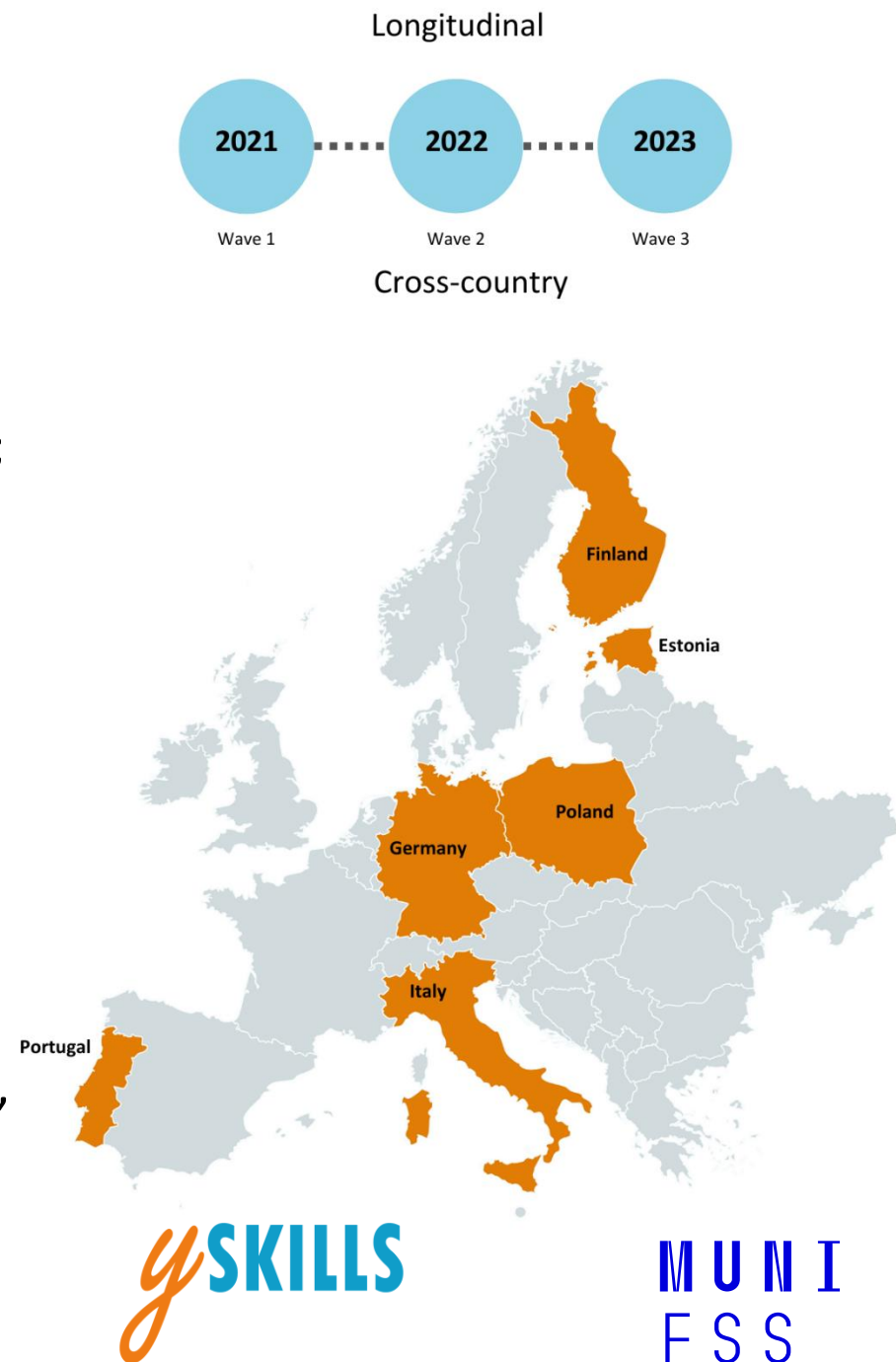
Perceived discrimination

Communication and interaction literacy – Digital Skills Indicator (yDSI;
Helsper et al., 2020)

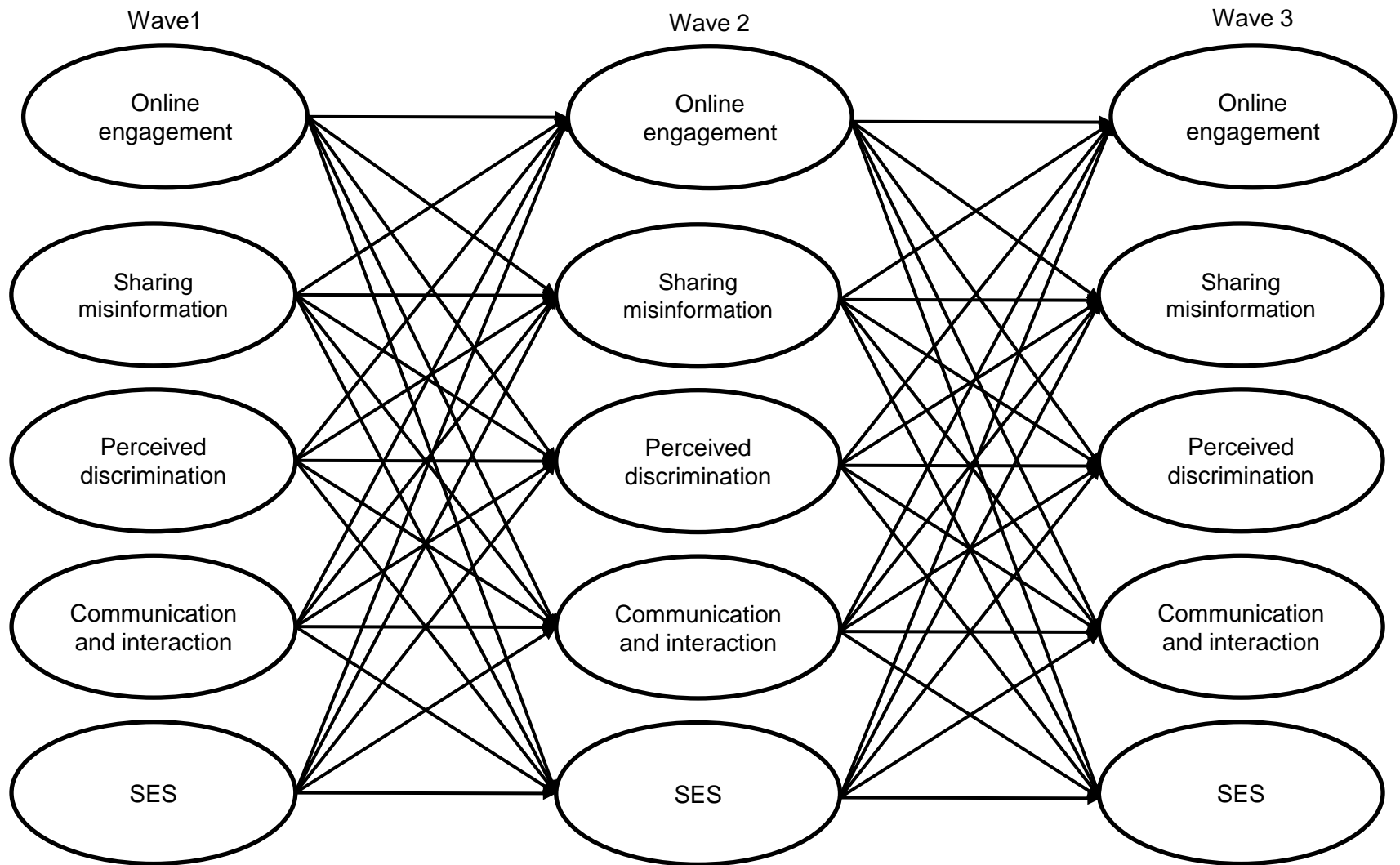
Subjective socioeconomic status (SES)

Sample

- three-wave longitudinal data (EU-funded Horizon 2020 project ySKILLS; Machackova et al., 2024) from six European countries: Estonia, Germany, Italy, Poland, Finland, and Portugal
- N = 9011
- Grades 6-10 at wave 1 ($M_{\text{age}} = 14.4$; $SD = 1.3$)
- 50.8% identified as boy, 47.6% as girl, 1.6% other



Model



Analysis

Mplus (version 8.10)

Random intercept cross-lagged panel model (RI-CLPM; Hamaker et al., 2015) with bayes estimator

Default (noninformative) priors

2 chains, 50000 iterations with thinning 10

Fit and convergence

Posterior predictive check 95%CI -43.846; 45.592

Posterior predictive p-value .483

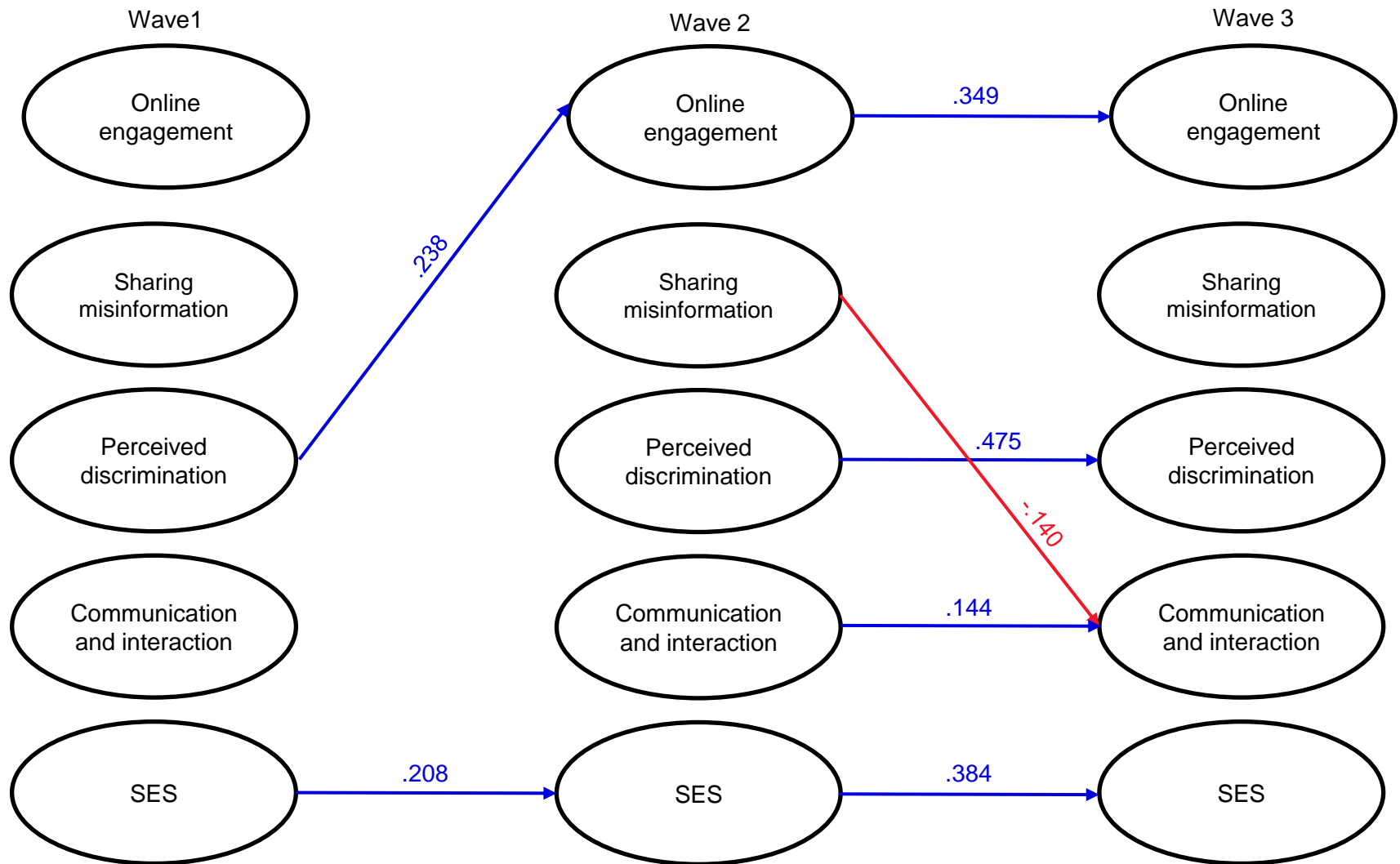
Potential scale reduction less than 1.01 after 50000 iterations

Results indicate convergence of the model (e.g., bayesian autocorrelations, trace plots)

Between-person results – RI correlations

	1	2	3	4
1 Online engagement				
2 Sharing misinformation	.588			
3 Perceived discrimination	.096	.364		
4 Communication and interaction	.234	.044	-.144	
5 SES	.006	-.057	-.187	.083

Within-person results



Conclusions

- Increase in perceived discrimination can increase online engagement – this increase in engagement can carry over in time
- Sharing misinformation can lead to more awareness and doubt about own capabilities, which then translates into decrease in communication skills
- Increase in communication literacy can increase awareness about own limits and its protective factor is not necessarily shown in self-report measurements
- Data collected during covid-19 pandemic

Limitations

- Online questionnaire design
- One item measurements
- Skeweness of some variables

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Thank you for your attention!

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