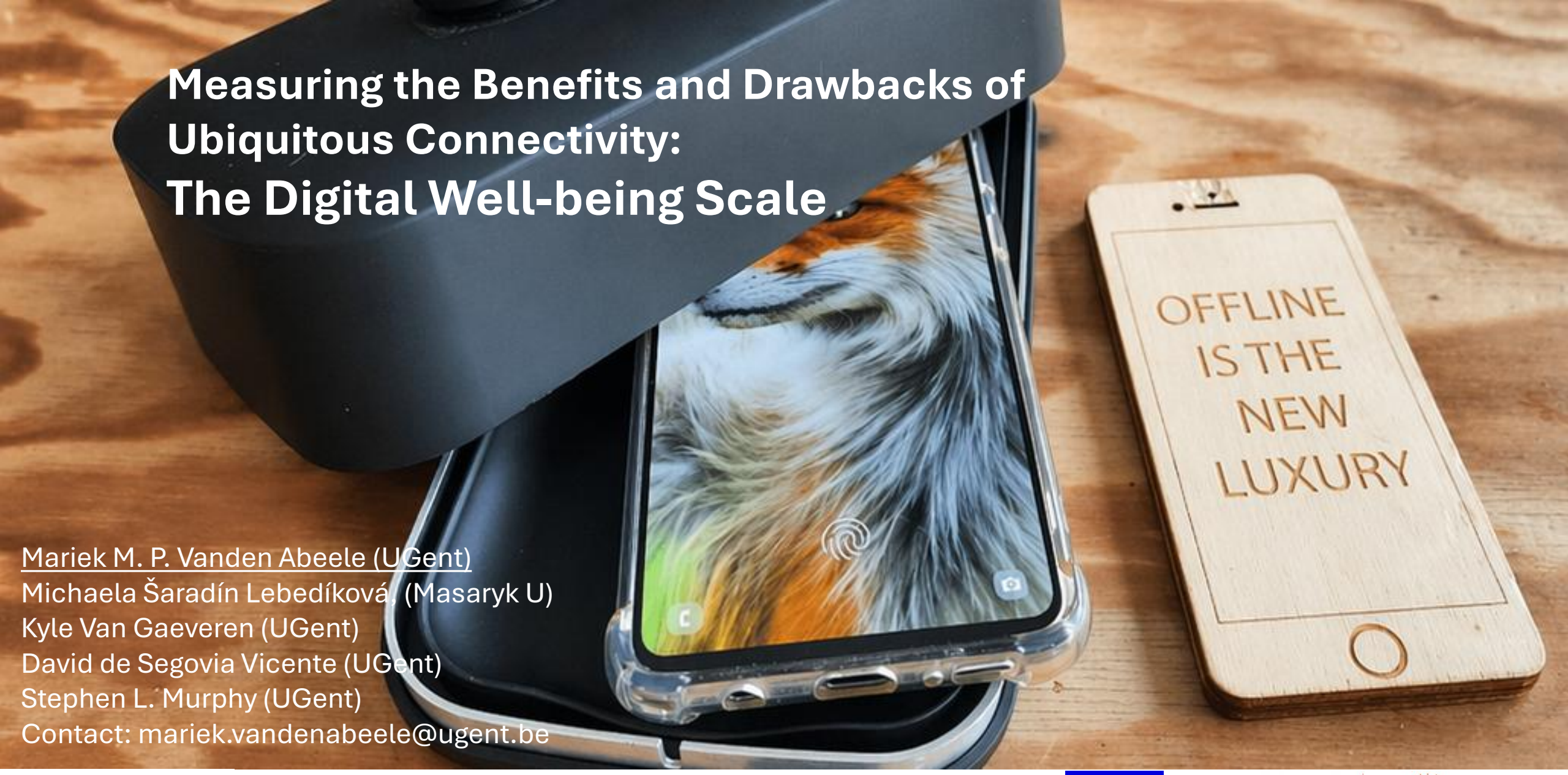

Measuring the Benefits and Drawbacks of Ubiquitous Connectivity: The Digital Well-being Scale

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THE AMBITION

A survey measure of ‘digital well-being’ representing a straightforward operationalization of a clear concept.

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THE PROBLEM:
WHAT IS DIGITAL WELL-BEING?

- Fuzzy concept
- Conceptualization contingent on underlying paradigmatic beliefs

[HTML] Perceived digital well-being scale in the United States and United Kingdom: psychometric validation study
GV Cruz, M Liberacka-Dwojak... - JMIR Mental ..., 2025 - mental.jmir.org
Background: Digital well-being encourages balanced mobile use. The Perceived Digital Well-Being in Adolescence Scale measures this in adolescents but has been validated only in ...
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Design and validation of the digital well-being scale
J Mathew, S Nair, R Gomes, A Mulasi... - Ricerche di Pedagogia e ..., 2023 - rpd.unibo.it
... The current study aimed to fill this gap by designing and validating a **digital wellbeing scale**. The ... The researchers hope that a valid **digital wellbeing scale** would not only encourage ...
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Psychometric validation of the English version of the digital wellbeing questionnaire for young adults
M Liberacka-Dwojak, GV Cruz, M Wiłkość-Dębczyńska... - Plos one, 2026 - journals.plos.org
... The first study focused on the Perceived **Digital Wellbeing Scale**, whereas the present manuscript provides psychometric validation of the DWBQ. This complementary publication ...
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Developing a **Digital Wellbeing Scale** Instrument for High School Students: Rasch Model Analysis
S Rohimah, ES Yudha, I Saripah - G-Couns: Jurnal Bimbingan dan ..., 2026 - journal.upy.ac.id
... underlying the **Digital Wellbeing Scale** developed in this study. From an applied standpoint, the availability of a psychometrically validated **Digital Wellbeing Scale** carries direct ...
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TWO DOMINANT CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO DIGITAL WELL-BEING

Digital well-being as a *moral orientation*

How can we live well in a society where digitization is overabundant?

Digital wellbeing as a *psychological condition*

How can we find an optimal balance between the benefits and drawbacks of ubiquitous connectivity?

DIGITAL WELL-BEING AS LIVING A GOOD LIFE IN A DIGITAL SOCIETY (MORAL APPROACH)

1. Moral-evaluative stance "technology should improve the quality of life" (Büchi, 2024, p. 174)
2. Assessed through an analysis of how *general* well-being is affected by digital media use

Crucially, the digital well-being framework keeps subjective well-being analytically separate from digital practices and harms and benefits. That is, digital practices, proximal harms and benefits, and distal subjective well-being remain separate measures whose causal links need to be theorized and tested. Consequently, digital well-being research should not resort to compressing the causal links between digital practices and well-being into a univariate self-assessment ("the way I use digital media makes me happy") or replace the reference point of subjective well-being—life in general or specific domains—with digital practice ("I am happy with my digital media use"). (Büchi, 2024, pp. 178-179)

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DIGITAL WELL-BEING AS LIVING A GOOD LIFE IN A DIGITAL SOCIETY (MORAL APPROACH)

1. Moral-evaluative stance "technology should improve the quality of life" (Büchi, 2024, p. 174)
2. Assessed through an analysis of how *general* well-being is affected by digital media use
3. Needs to be achieved via literacy - particular knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Within a condition of digital well-being, individuals are able to channel digital media usage towards a sense of comfort, safety, satisfaction and fulfilment. As we have seen above, this condition is favoured both by specific individuals' skills and by the socio-cultural context they live in. […] Indeed, digital well-being pertains not only to the attainment of gratifications and minimisation of collateral effects of digital media use (hedonic dimension) but also concerns the ability to use these technologies to give meaning to one's activities and realise one's own potential in life (eudaimonic dimension). (Gui et al., 2017, p. 166)

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DIGITAL WELLBEING AS OPTIMAL BALANCE BETWEEN BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF UBIQUITOUS CONNECTIVITY (PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH)

1. Ability to make evaluative judgements – or appraisals – over it; Digital well-being as not a *contributor*, but rather as a *facet or dimension* of well-being.
2. Approachable through direct self-assessment, and crucial to understand media effects (cf. Wolfers (2024))
3. Opens up the possibility of:
   - Ambivalent (love/hate)
   - Heterogeneity and situatedness

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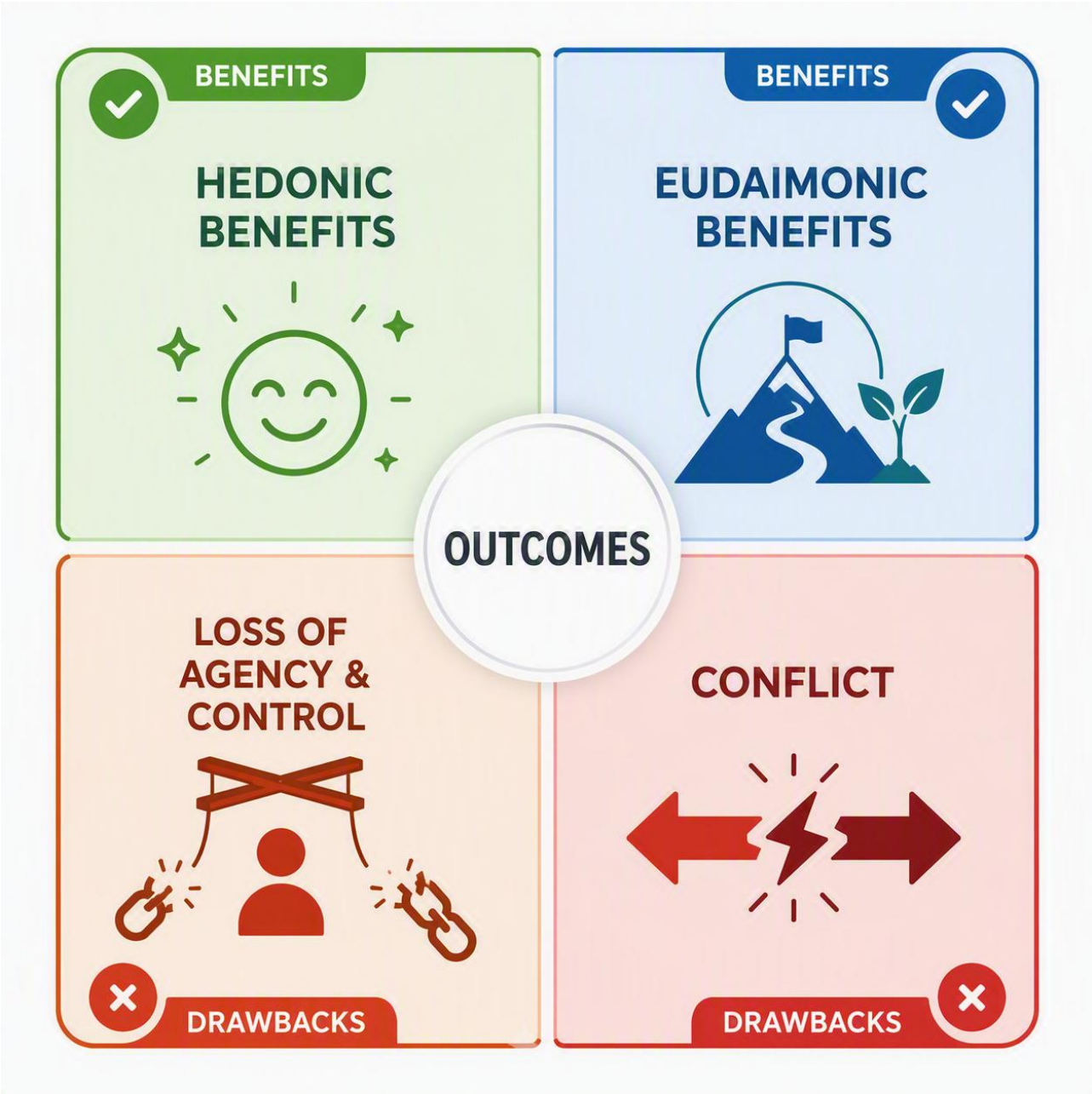
OPERATIONALIZING DIGITAL WELL-BEING

Step 1: 11 items based on qualitative work of Nguyen (2021) and Nguyen et al. (2022): 6 items measuring functional support, and 5 items measuring agency (see Vanden Abeele & Nguyen, 2024).

Step 2: Further development of 16 items; pilot-tested in a group of 9 students at Tilburg University, the Netherlands

Step 3: 12 items retained; tested in a preregistered study



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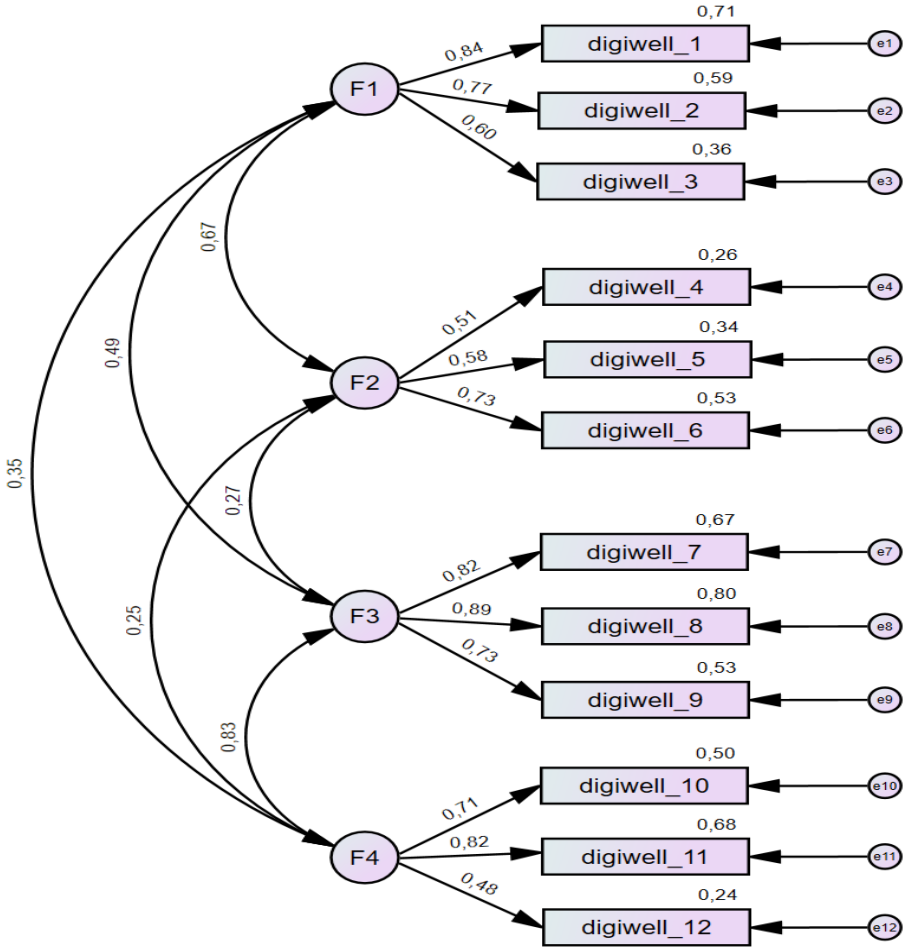
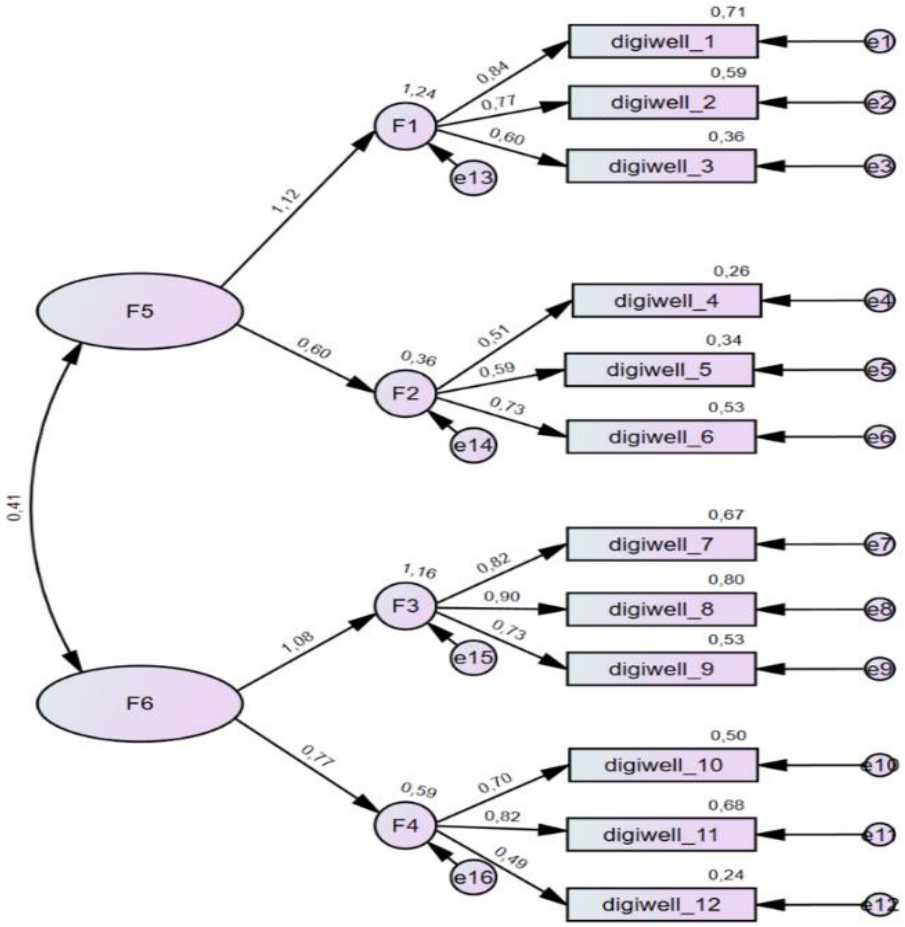
My smartphone is a source of entertainment in my life.
My smartphone helps me combat boredom.
I enjoy using social media on my smartphone.
My smartphone helps me organize the practicalities of life.
I find inspiration and meaning in my use of my smartphone.
My smartphone is essential to my social life.
My smartphone is a waste of time.
My smartphone distracts me more than I would like.
My smartphone makes me less present in the moment.
My smartphone is a source of stress.
My smartphone hampers my performance (e.g., at work, at home, in my social relationships).
My smartphone use leads to conflict.

MEASURING DIGITAL WELL-BEING





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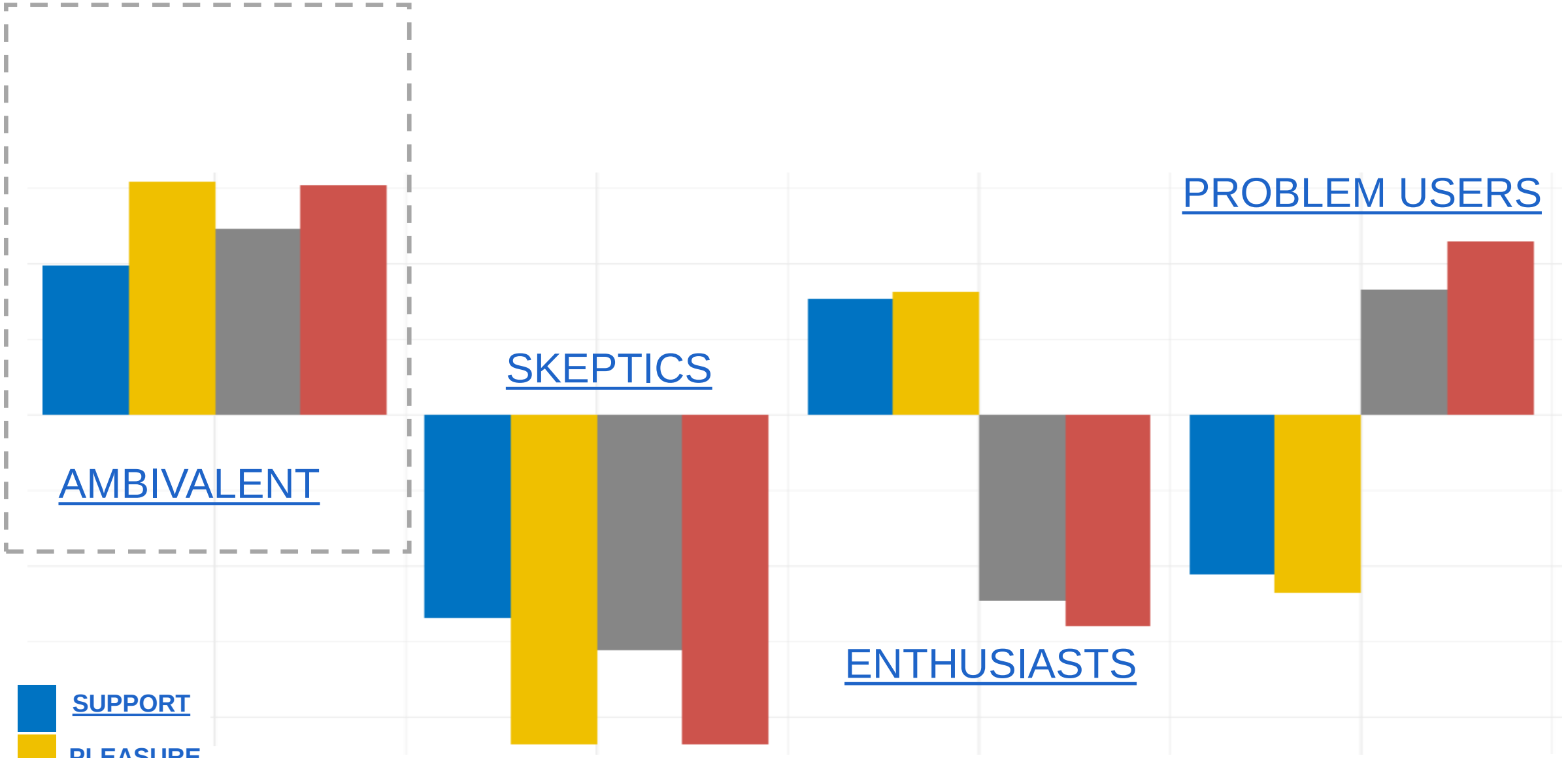
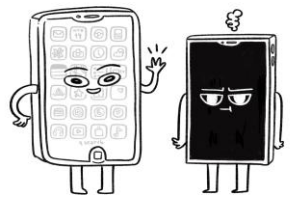
Our analysis showed the four-factor model achieved moderate model fit ($X^2(48)= 501.49$, $p < .001$, *CFI* = .93, *RMSEA* = .08, *SRMR* = 0.06). A second-order two-factor model obtained a highly similar model fit ($X^2(49) = 507.06$, $p < .001$; CFI = .93, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = 0.06). The Cronbach Alpha value of the combined set of 'benefit' items was highly satisfactory (α = .78), as was the Cronbach Alpha value for the combined set of 'drawback' items (α = .85).



https://www.standaard.be/profieltest-on-off

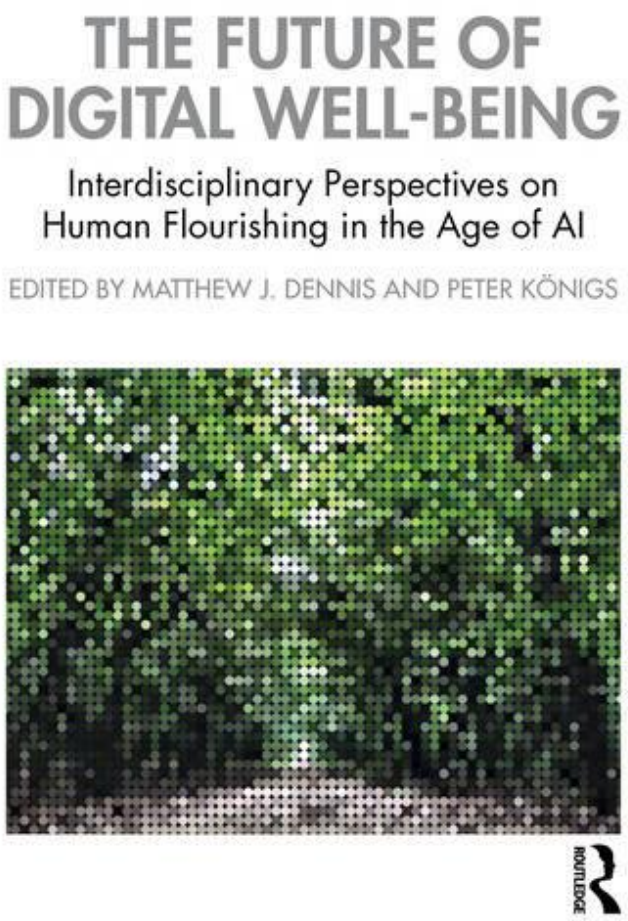


CONCLUSION

Digital Well-being, conceptualized as a psychological construct, can be measured

Other instruments developed in parallell, especially Lee and Hancock's (2024) Social Media Mindsets measure (benefits/agency), are remarkably similar, attesting to the importance of assessing media perceptions in the study of media effects.

Want the chapter? Email: mariek.vandenabeele@ugent.be



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