

Wearable Insights: The Potential of Tracking Technology to Enrich Psychological Research?

Autorin: Mag. Fabiola Gattringer

Wearables and tracking tools are on the rise on the market, and prominent manufacturers introduce an improved device almost each year. Devices come in manifold forms, colors, and with different functionalities for every occasion: from smart clothing over fashionable accessories to data glasses, with the capability to measure all kinds of scientifically interesting data. What possibilities offer these wearables and self-tracking technologies for scientific research, especially in the field of psychology and social sciences? More specifically, what added value has the collection of such objective biometric data in connection with subjective self-reported data via online surveys? We conducted a literature research on studies with and about wearables and tools to measure physical and biometric data to provide a base for our review on possibilities for future scientific research. Additionally, a quantitative survey study (n = 98) yielded a first insight in the usability and acceptance of wearables in everyday life, especially working life. In our review, we evaluate the pros and cons of these tools for scientific research in social sciences, and highlight promising research trends.