



AI and digital mental health tool use in young adults (18–24) in Cyprus



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INTRODUCTION

Young adults increasingly use digital technologies to access mental health information, assess psychological difficulties, monitor their emotional well-being, and seek support. These include mental health apps, online therapy platforms, social media, websites, and AI tools such as chatbots and conversational agents.

Digital mental health technologies may reduce barriers to support by offering accessible, immediate, and potentially anonymous resources. However, concerns remain regarding their effectiveness, reliability, data privacy, inaccurate information, over-reliance, and possible delays in professional help-seeking. Understanding how young adults use and perceive these technologies is therefore important for developing safe and evidence-informed digital mental health resources. **This study examines the use and perceptions of AI and non-AI digital mental health technologies among young adults in Cyprus.**

OBJECTIVES

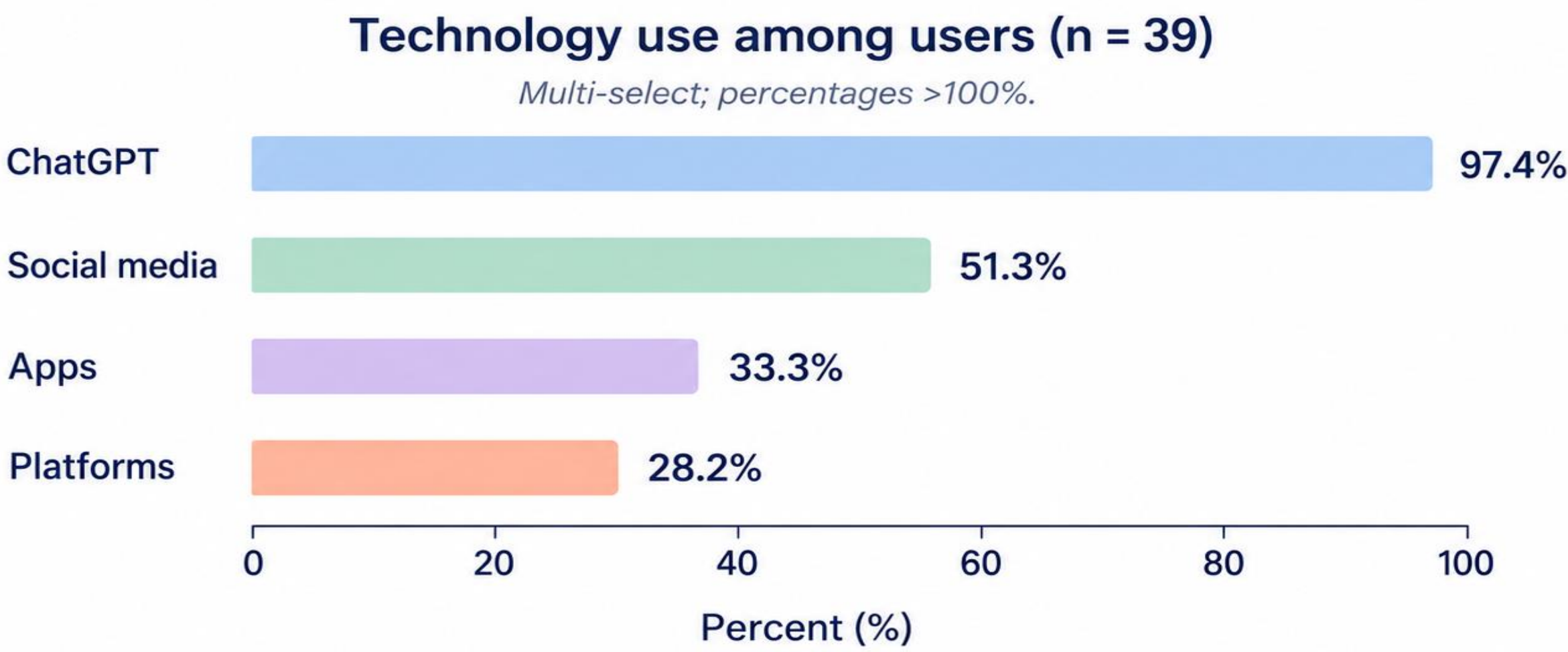
- Specifically, the study aimed to:
- Examine patterns of digital and AI mental health technology use
 - Explore attitudes toward these technologies
 - Assess perceived usefulness for self-awareness and early intervention
 - Examine perceived benefits and risks, including privacy, dependence, and negative effects
 - Explore associations with mental health and well-being

METHODS

A cross-sectional anonymous survey was completed by young adults aged 18–24 living in Cyprus (**N = 107**). The survey assessed patterns of AI/digital mental health technology use, AI attitudes (AIAS-4), perceived usefulness and risks, psychological distress (DASS-8), and wellbeing (WHO-5). Analyses involving technology-related measures were restricted to previous users (n = 39). Descriptive statistics, reliability analyses, correlations, and exploratory multiple linear regressions were conducted in R, using a prespecified significance threshold of $\alpha = .005$.

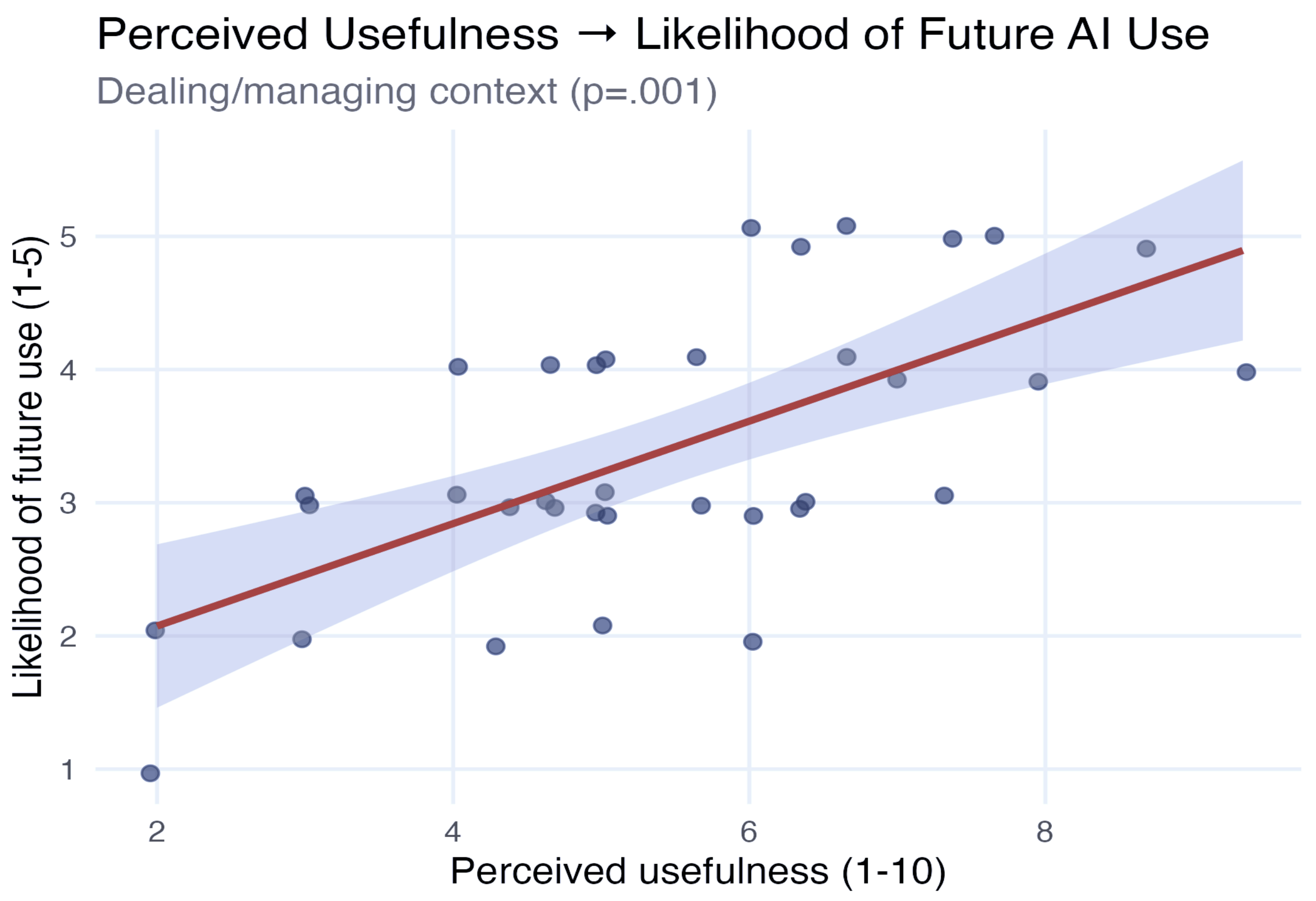
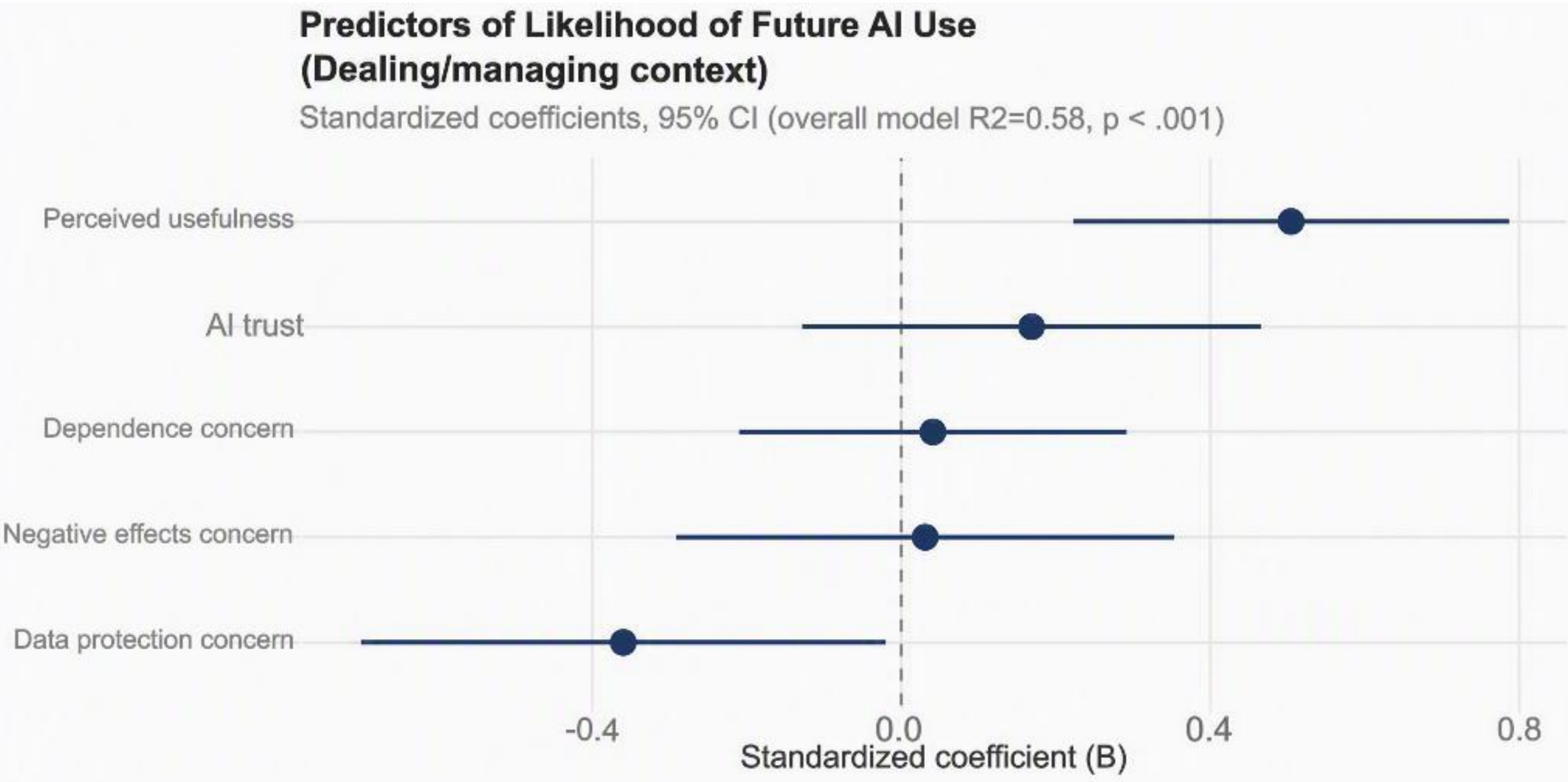
RESULTS

36.4%
used AI/digital mental health tools
n = 39



1. Purpose-built AI mental health tools were uncommon: MindDoc was used by 1/39 participants (2.6%), while Replika and Wysa were not reported.
2. AI attitudes were slightly above the scale midpoint (M = 6.72/10 per item, SD = 1.67; 1 = “Not at all,” 10 = “Completely agree”).
3. Perceived usefulness was moderate (M = 5.26, SD = 1.89; 1-10 scale), suggesting that participants viewed AI as somewhat useful. The three usefulness items showed good internal consistency ($\alpha = .82$) and were averaged into a composite score.
4. Concerns were moderate for data protection (M = 5.62, SD = 2.59), dependence (M = 5.41, SD = 3.35), and possible negative effects (M = 5.13, SD = 2.25; 1-10 scale). As these items represented distinct risk dimensions and did not form a coherent composite ($\alpha = .53$), they were examined separately rather than averaged into a single risk score.

- The regression model predicting likelihood of future AI use in the dealing/managing context was significant, explaining 58% of the variance ($R^2 = .58$, $p < .001$). Perceived usefulness was the only predictor meeting the prespecified $\alpha = .005$ threshold ($\beta = .51$, $p = .001$). The corresponding self-assessment model explained 44% of the variance ($R^2 = .44$, $p = .004$), although no individual predictor met the $\alpha = .005$ threshold. No associations meeting $\alpha = .005$ were detected between AI-related perceptions and psychological distress, wellbeing, or professional help-seeking.



DISCUSSION

- AI and digital mental health technology use was reported by approximately one third of the sample. Use was dominated by general-purpose conversational AI, particularly ChatGPT, rather than purpose-built mental health tools.
- Perceived usefulness emerged as the clearest factor associated with intention to use AI again, particularly when AI was used to manage mental health difficulties. Greater perceived usefulness was associated with stronger intentions to use AI again, particularly for managing mental health difficulties.
- The findings should be interpreted cautiously because analyses involving technology users were based on a relatively small and predominantly female subgroup.

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