

## HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

### Masaryk University

**Faculty**

Faculty of Social Studies

**Applicant**

Mgr. Ivan Ropovik, PhD.

**Habilitation thesis**

Addressing measurement and evidence quality idealizations in gaming research

**Reviewer**

Dr. Vasileios Stavropoulos

**Reviewer's home unit, institution**

Cyberpsychology Lab, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University

The submitted habilitation thesis presents a coherent, methodologically rigorous, and intellectually mature body of work addressing foundational issues in psychological research, using gaming disorder as a theoretically and empirically appropriate case study. The thesis consists of eight original studies that are well integrated through a shared introduction, clearly articulated research questions, and a reflective general discussion.

A central strength of the thesis lies in its sustained engagement with measurement assumptions in psychopathology. Across the studies, the work implicitly but consistently highlights the crucial distinction between reflective and formative constructs, an issue that remains insufficiently addressed in traditional diagnostic and classificatory systems. Whereas dominant nosological frameworks typically assume symptoms to be interchangeable indicators of an underlying latent disorder, the thesis demonstrates that this assumption is often problematic. Instead, symptoms may function as interacting components that jointly constitute the disorder, with important implications for theory, measurement, and interpretation.

The candidate's use of the network approach is theoretically grounded and empirically careful. Network modelling is not presented as a merely technical alternative to latent-variable approaches, but as a substantive challenge to long-standing assumptions about the nature of mental disorders. The work is characterised by a high level of reflexivity, conceptual clarity, and healthy methodological scepticism, which strengthens its contribution to ongoing debates in the field.

At the same time, the thesis naturally points toward further conceptual extensions. In particular, the findings and modelling choices align well with continuous, dimension-based and transdiagnostic approaches to psychopathology. In simple terms, such approaches move beyond rigid diagnostic categories and instead conceptualise mental health problems as gradual variations in symptom patterns and processes that cut across traditional diagnoses. The network perspective adopted throughout the thesis appears highly compatible with this view and could be further developed in future work.

Relatedly, the thesis opens promising avenues for advanced measurement modelling, including Item Response Theory (IRT). IRT allows individual symptoms to be examined in terms of severity, discrimination, and informational value across the latent continuum. Integrating IRT-based insights with network-informed conceptualisations could further refine

symptom assessment and improve sensitivity across severity levels, particularly in longitudinal and developmental research.

The scientific quality of the thesis is strongly supported by the candidate's publication record. Most included studies have been published in high-quality international journals, with the candidate serving as first or senior author on the majority of them. Citation counts are already substantial given the recency of several publications, and the overall trajectory suggests a clear upward developmental trend. A simple regression-based projection of this trajectory would reasonably predict continued growth in scholarly impact.

Finally, the thesis conveys the impression of a researcher with whom substantive and intellectually productive discussions would be both possible and valuable. The work reflects independence of thought, openness to debate, and strong potential for continued theoretical and methodological development.

**Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence** (number of questions up to the reviewer)

- 1) To what extent does the author view network models as fundamentally incompatible with latent-variable approaches, and might certain disorders or stages of disorder development legitimately exhibit both characteristics?
- 2) How does the author position the network approach in relation to dimensional and transdiagnostic frameworks of psychopathology?
- 3) How might Item Response Theory be integrated with network models to further improve symptom-level measurement?
- 4) To what extent are the observed network structures expected to generalise from non-clinical to clinical populations?

## **Conclusion**

The habilitation thesis entitled "Addressing measurement and evidence quality idealizations in gaming research" by Mgr. Ivan Ropovik, PhD., **fulfils** the requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of General Psychology.

Date: 02/02/2026

Signature:

