



University of
HUDDERSFIELD
Inspiring global professionals

Cyberpsychology Research Network (CRN)

Annual Report June 2024 – May 2025

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Executive Summary

The Cyberpsychology Research Network (CRN) is an international, interdisciplinary initiative established in September 2023 at the University of Huddersfield. Our mission is to explore and address the psychological impact of digital technologies on human behaviour, and to produce research that informs policy, professional practice, and public understanding in an increasingly digital world.

Key Achievements

- 39 peer-reviewed publications across high-impact journals in cyberpsychology, psychology, and behavioural science.
- 6 grant applications submitted, totalling over £545,000 in potential research funding.
- Hosted the Cyberpsychology Conference 2025 with international attendance.
- Provided expert commentary in international media outlets, including ABC News, 20 Minutes (France), and L'Express.
- Presented research at major conferences including the European Society of Criminology and Socioecos 2024 (Spain).
- Expanded our network to include 30+ academic partners across Europe, Middle East, Africa, North America, USA and Asia.
- Supported the development and involvement of multiple MSc and PhD students in active research.

Strategic Aims 2025–2026

- Formalise new institutional partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).
- Launch an MSc in the area of Cyberpsychology.
- Develop CPD offerings for professionals.
- Establish a dedicated Cyberpsychology Research Centre.
- Increase public engagement through a Digital Literacy and Online Safety Campaign.
- Increase and maintain a record of attracting external competitively allocated funds, including cross-sector collaborations.
- Develop a doctoral training pathway and secure PhD studentships in cyberpsychology.

Impact & Public Value

CRN's work is already influencing policy, education, and frontline practice:

- Policy: Cited in government and think tank-level reports on misinformation and radicalisation
- Education: Developing future leaders in digital safety and psychological science through postgraduate and doctoral training.
- Practice: Delivering sessions for the police and offering insights to social media safety platforms.
- Media: Shaping public conversations around online harm, gender bias, disinformation, and digital exploitation.

At a Glance: CRN 2024–2025

Metric	Outcome
Peer-reviewed publications	39
Grant applications submitted	6
Value of funding bids	£545,000+
Countries of collaboration	15+
Events hosted	1 major conference
Media features	7+ international articles
MSc / PhD students involved	8+

CRN 2024–2025 Timeline & Highlights

Date	Milestone / Activity
Feb 2024	Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship submitted – <i>Suicidal Ideation & Violence</i>
Mar 2024	Nuffield Foundation outline submitted – <i>Algorithms & Mental Health</i>
Apr 2024	Research presented at Socioecos Conference, Bilbao
Nov 2024	ABC News (Australia) features CRN research on drink and needle spiking
Dec 2024	Ran online radicalisation workshop for Metropolitan police
Feb 2025	Featured in 20 Minutes (France) article on Hybristophilia and media psychology
Apr 2025	Cyberpsychology Conference 2025 hosted at University of Huddersfield

Publications by Research Theme (2024–2025)

Research Area	# of Publications
Sextortion and Sexual Exploitation	9
Online Radicalisation & Extremism	8
Gender, Violence & Public Perception	7
Disinformation, AI & Online Safety	6
Social media & Mental Health	5
Cyberbullying, Grooming & Youth Risk	4
Total	39 (Published/In Press)

Who we are

The Cyberpsychology Research Network (CRN) is an international collaboration between universities, practitioners, industry and researchers with the aim to produce original and innovative research on the impact of technology on human behaviour, create a team of research active staff with a common interest in Cyberpsychology and produce high quality, multi-disciplinary, international publications. Founded in September 2023, the research produced from this network impacts both policy and practice of online/offline spaces. CRN's research aims to inform legal frameworks, enhance reporting mechanisms and responses by law enforcement and investigative agencies, and guide the development of targeted policies to improve safety and security for social media users.

Founders

Co-Director – Professor Maria Ioannou

BSc, MSc, PhD, C.Psychol, CSci, AFBPsS, FHEA, CMgr MCMI

Professor Maria Ioannou (Co-Director) is a Professor in Psychology and Course Director for the MSc Investigative Psychology. She is a Chartered Forensic Psychologist (British Psychological Society) and a HCPC Registered Psychologist (Forensic). Dr Ioannou has been involved in the assessment of intervention programmes for reducing/preventing crime for a range of different forms of criminality and groups of offenders. Typically, these evaluations have required assessments of change/impact/influence of the interventions on individuals and their criminal behaviour as well as assessments of the overall programme itself. <https://pure.hud.ac.uk/en/persons/maria-ioannou>



Co-Director – Dr Calli Tzani

BA (Hons), MSc, PhD, PGCHE, FHEA, C.Psychol

Dr Calli Tzani (Co-Director) is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology. Dr Tzani has expertise in criminal psychology and has an extensive publication record on various crime related areas, including school bullying, cyberbullying, cyber-fraud, cybercrime, sextortion, terrorism, wellbeing, and many other areas related to psychology and crime. Dr Tzani is a fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and is a member of several advisory bodies, including the Institute on Crime and Criminal Justice Policy, European Public Law Organisation (EPLO) as well as the Forensic Editor of the BPS magazine ADM. <https://pure.hud.ac.uk/en/persons/calli-tzani-pepelasi>



Staff

Research Fellow - Dr Thomas James Vaughan Williams

Dr Thomas James Vaughan Williams is a Research Fellow in Psychology, whose research areas include radicalisation and online behaviours. They have presented at both domestic and international conferences, working as a research fellow for the Cyberpsychology Network.

<https://pure.hud.ac.uk/en/persons/thomas-james-vaughan-williams>



Postgraduate Researchers

Omer Canbolat

Title: Developing a School-Based Preventive Program to Combat Peer Bullying and Cyberbullying: A Risk and Protective Factors Approach

Summary: Ömer Faruk Canbolat is a PhD researcher at the University of Huddersfield focusing on school bullying and cyberbullying. His research targets to identify current bullying situations and to evaluate the current situation to create safer educational environments and to develop a preventive programme. The project aims to better understand the nature of bullying among students and reduce its impact through a model-based intervention. By considering both risk and protective factors, the study provides practical information that can inform future policy and educational practice.



Sally Crosland

Title: Perceptions of female perpetrators of intimate partner homicide.

Summary: Sally's research focuses on women who commit violent crime, specifically domestic violence and homicide. Her doctoral research is a mixed methods design and focuses on stereotyping of female violent offenders, in particular perpetrators of intimate partner homicide. Development and validation of the Attitudes Towards Female Perpetrators of Intimate Partner Homicide (AF-PIPH) scale has allowed exploration of the potential effects of stereotyping, examining links between specific biases and likely jury outcomes. Sal's PhD research is currently examining the manifestation of these identified biases in mock jury settings and taking a deeper look into how individuals talk about female IPH perpetrators.



Rachel Fletcher

Title: Sextortion: Victim Profiles and Correlations with Broader Criminal Activities

Summary: Sextortion is a growing digital risk which describes the threat to expose or distribute victims sexually explicit material to coerce them into performing acts against their will, such as sharing additional images, engaging in sexual acts, or transferring money. Unlike other forms of image-based sexual abuse, sextortion has a broad victim typology, with different ages and genders targeted with different demands. This research seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of these different typologies, exploring variability in the demographics and experiences of those targeted for financial gain, sexual gratification, or control. This includes examining the different strategies and tactics used by sextortion perpetrators, including digital methods and psychological manipulation, the vulnerabilities which make individuals susceptible, and exploring the link between sextortion and other forms of victimisation.



Summer Herbert

Title: An Exploration of the Rise in Knife Crime Among Young People in the United Kingdom

Summary: Her PhD research investigates the rising prevalence of knife crime among young people in the UK through five interconnected studies. It explores public perception and personal experiences, the role of social media in shaping attitudes, and youth perspectives on knife crime. Additionally, it examines the influence of UK Rap, Drill, and Grime lyrics, as well as the potential impact of violent video games. The project seeks to understand the complex influences behind youth knife crime and why more children are using and carrying knives and/or sharp instruments.



Daniel Legassick

Title: Exploring the Narratives and Motivations of Image-Based Sexual Offenders

Summary: The aims and objectives of his study are to explore whether there are any apparent narratives that can be applied to image-based sexual offenders, and to explore the motivations for their offending. If we can better understand how the offender(s) view themselves at the time of committing their offences, and better understand the motivations for such offences, then we may be able to predict and thus prevent them from occurring in future.



Lucas Rogers

Title: Online Depictions of Suicide: How Communities and Trends Emerge from Digital Self-Harm

Summary: The focus of his research surrounds instances where the self-harm or suicide of an individual has been facilitated by the internet. This can take many forms, such as through livestreamed suicides, suicide pacts formed through social media, or through suicide-based social media 'challenges' such as the Blue Whale Challenge. During his research he has also explored the harmful content that has been posted to sites such as Instagram and Twitter surrounding suicide and self-harm, the magnitude of the reach of such content, and the negative impact that this content can have on its audience.



Antonia Woolf

Title: Gender Based Violence on Dating Applications

Summary: Antonia Woolf is conducting a PhD on gender-based violence (GBV) on online dating applications and websites. The aim of her study is to examine and compare the prevalence and nature of GBV on various niche dating sites aimed at different demographics such as mature adults, young adults and adolescents; people seeking different levels of connection; people from different religious communities and different working professionals. The aim of her PhD is to provide evidence-based intervention proposals to increase user safety and inform policy development to better prevent GBV on all online dating platforms.



Publications

Published/In press

Danger on Discord: How 764 Prey on and Extort Minors

This research investigates the exploitation of minors on the Discord platform, focusing on the methods used by predators to prey on and extort young users. It highlights the risks associated with online communication platforms and the need for protective measures.

Fletcher, R., Tzani, C., & Ioannou, M. (Accepted/In press). Danger on Discord: How 764 Prey on and Extort Minors. *Assessment and Development Matters*.

Impact of Social Media on Knife Crime in the UK

This article examines the relationship between social media usage and knife crime in the UK. It explores how online platforms may influence violent behavior, including the role of social media in escalating conflicts and glamorizing violence among youth.

Herbert, S., Ioannou, M., & Tzani, C. (Accepted/In press). Impact of Social Media on Knife Crime in the UK. *Assessment and Development Matters*.

Suicide-based Content on Social Media: A Brief Literature Review

This literature review focuses on the presence and impact of suicide-related content on social media. It assesses how such content affects users, particularly vulnerable individuals, and discusses the implications for mental health and suicide prevention efforts.

Rogers, L., Ioannou, M., Tzani, C., & Williams, T. J. V. (Accepted/In press). Suicide-based Content on Social Media: A Brief Literature Review. *Assessment and Development Matters*.

Social Media's Dangerous Fantasy: How the Trad Wife Movement Fuels Inequality and Gender-Based Violence

This study explores the "Trad Wife" movement on social media, analyzing how it perpetuates traditional gender roles and potentially contributes to gender-based inequality and violence. It examines the narratives promoted by the movement and their societal implications.

Woolf, A., Tzani, C., Ioannou, M., & Williams, T. J. V. (Accepted/In press). Social Media's Dangerous Fantasy: How the Trad Wife Movement Fuels Inequality and Gender-Based Violence. *Assessment and Development Matters*.

Emotionally Tough, Sexting Rough: Investigating the Relationship Between Callous Unemotional Traits and Aggravated Sexting in 11 Countries

This cross-national study investigates the link between callous-unemotional traits and aggressive sexting behaviors among individuals in 11 countries. It aims to understand how certain personality traits may influence risky online sexual behaviors.

Morelli, M., Rosati, F., Cattellino, E., Urbini, F., Baiocco, R., Bianchi, D., Laghi, F., Gasseau, M., Sorokowski, P., Misiak, M., Dziekan, M., Hudson, H., Marshall, A., Truc Nguyen, T., Mark, L., Kopecky, K., Szotkowski, R., Toplu Demirtaş, E., Van Ouytsel, J., ... Chirumbolo, A. (Accepted/In press). Emotionally Tough, Sexting Rough: Investigating the Relationship Between Callous Unemotional Traits and Aggravated Sexting in 11 Countries. *Psicothema*.

Can metamemory judgements predict the risk of memory contamination for facial descriptions?

This research investigates whether individuals' metamemory judgments can predict the likelihood of memory contamination when recalling facial descriptions. It has implications for the reliability of eyewitness testimonies in legal contexts.

Mojtahedi, D., Williams, T. J. V., Hunt, D., Ioannou, M., Synnott, J., Tzani, C., & van der Kemp, J. (Accepted/In press). Can metamemory judgements predict the risk of memory contamination for facial descriptions? *Legal and Criminological Psychology*.

The Escalation of Stalking into Homicide: A Thematic Analysis of Offender Behaviours, Policing Failures, and the Requirement for a Stalkers Register and Risk Assessment Tool

This thematic analysis examines cases where stalking escalated into homicide, focusing on offender behaviors, policing failures, and the necessity for a stalkers register and risk assessment tool. The study highlights the lack of effective intervention strategies and the need for systemic changes to prevent such escalations.

Clayton, G., Tzani, C., Ioannou, M., Williams, T. J. V., Gunn, R., & Fletcher, R. (Accepted/In press). The Escalation of Stalking into Homicide: A Thematic Analysis of Offender Behaviours, Policing Failures, and the Requirement for a Stalkers Register and Risk Assessment Tool. *Violence and Victims*.

Are Social Media Platforms Blurring the Lines Between Coercive Control and Healthy Relationships? A Study Investigating Perceptions of Coercive Control

The study explores how social media platforms may influence perceptions of coercive control in relationships, potentially blurring the lines between control and care. It examines user experiences and societal implications.

Scothorne, H., Tzani, C., Ioannou, M., Lester, D., Rogers, L., Williams, T. J. V., Synnott, J., & Darmanin Kissaun, G. (2025). Are social media platforms blurring the lines between coercive control and healthy relationship? A study investigating perceptions of coercive control. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 168, [108649]. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2025.108649>

Female Perpetrators of Intimate Partner Homicide: Stereotyping and Factors. A Systematic Review of Twenty Years of Literature, 2003–2023

This systematic review examines literature from 2003 to 2023 on female perpetrators of intimate partner homicide (IPH). It explores prevailing stereotypes and identifies key factors contributing to such homicides, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the motivations and circumstances surrounding female-perpetrated IPH.

Crosland, S., Tzani, C., & Ioannou, M. (2025). Female Perpetrators of Intimate Partner Homicide: Stereotyping and Factors. A Systematic Review of Twenty Years of Literature, 2003–2023. *Deviant Behavior*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2025.2501618>

The grip of crime: Analyzing strangulation and asphyxiation typologies in homicide cases

This study analyzes homicide cases involving strangulation and asphyxiation to identify typologies and patterns. It seeks to understand the characteristics of such crimes, including offender profiles and situational factors, to inform investigative and preventative strategies.

Petreca VG, Tzani-Pepelasis K, Ioannou M, Siggery A, McBride L, Barros E, et al. (2025). The grip of crime: Analyzing strangulation and asphyxiation typologies in homicide cases. *J Forensic Sci.* 2025; 70: 1094–1104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.70021>

The Pursuit of Happiness: A Multinational Exploration into the Effects and Outcomes of Online Dating

This study investigates the effects of online dating platforms on users' wellbeing and the success rates of forming relationships through these services. Conducted across four countries—Croatia, Greece, Italy, and Malta—the research involved 618 participants. The findings indicate that online dating does not significantly affect users' wellbeing, neither positively nor negatively, and that the majority of users did not experience success in forming lasting relationships through these platforms.

Tzani, C., Ioannou, M., Synnott, J., Williams, T.J.V., Artinopoulou, V., Ntountoumi, L., Dodaj, A., Sesar, K., Kissaun, G.D., Cattelino, E., Chirumbolo, A., Baiocco, R., Nappa, M.R., Morelli, M. and Vaughan, B. (2025), "The pursuit of happiness: a multinational exploration into the effects and outcomes of online dating", *Mental Health and Social Inclusion*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MHSI-03-2025-0089>

A Systematic Review Comparing the Pre-event Behaviours of Suicide by Mass Violence With Individuals Who Commit Suicide Without Mass Violence

This systematic review compares the pre-event behaviors of individuals who commit suicide through mass violence with those who commit suicide without involving mass violence. The study identifies six key behavioral differences, providing insights into the distinct pathways leading to these tragic outcomes.

Williams, T. J. V. (2025). A Systematic Review Comparing the Pre-event Behaviours of Suicide by Mass Violence With Individuals Who Commit Suicide Without Mass Violence. *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228251323641>

Writing to Death Row Inmates: Pen-Pals Share Their Experience

This article explores the experiences of individuals who correspond with death row inmates, examining the motivations behind such interactions and the psychological impacts on both the inmates and the pen-pals. The study sheds light on the complexities of these relationships and their implications for criminal justice and rehabilitation.

Latteri, S., Tzani, C., Roach, J., Ioannou, M., & Williams, T. J. V. (2025). Writing to death row inmates: pen-pals share their experience. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 1–21.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2025.2466074>

The Impact of Offence Type and Gender-Role Attitudes on Sentencing Decisions for Male and Female Offenders

This research investigates how offense type and gender-role attitudes influence sentencing decisions for male and female offenders. The study finds that while female offenders are often sentenced more leniently than male offenders, other factors, such as the nature of the offense and the gender-role attitudes of the decision-maker, also play significant roles in sentencing outcomes.

Trist, S., Tzani, C., Ioannou, M., Williams, T. J. V., Mojtahedi, D., & Fumagalli, A. (2025). The Impact of Offence Type and Gender-Role Attitudes On Sentencing Decisions For Male and Female Offenders. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, 22(1), [e1646]. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jip.1646>

Victim's Individual Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities to Sexual Online Grooming

This study identifies individual risk factors and vulnerabilities that make victims susceptible to sexual online grooming. It aims to inform prevention strategies by understanding the characteristics that increase the risk of victimization.

Ioannou, M., & Synnott, J. (2025). Victim's Individual Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities to Sexual Online Grooming. In L. F. Kuhle, & D. Stelzmann (Eds.), *Sexual Online Grooming of Children:*

Challenges for Science and Practice (Vol. 2, pp. 57-74). Nomos

Verlagsgesellschaft. <https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/de/10.5771/9783748903291-57/2-2-victim-s-individual-risk-factors-and-vulnerabilities-to-sexual-online-grooming?page=1>

Dating Applications: A Honeypot for Sextortion Victims

This research examines how dating applications can be exploited for sextortion schemes. It analyzes victim experiences and suggests preventive measures to protect users from such exploitation

Tavakoli, H., Tzani, C., Ioannou, M., Williams, T. J. V., Drouin, M., & Fletcher, R. (2024). Dating Applications: A Honeypot for Sextortion Victims. *Deviant Behavior*, 45(12), 1655–1666.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2024.2317904>

Unpacking the Construction of Online Identities of Hybristophilia Communities on TikTok

This paper investigates how communities fascinated by individuals who commit crimes (hybristophilia) construct their identities on TikTok. It analyzes the expressions and behaviors within these online communities

Williams, T. J. V., Slater, H. E., & Tamayo Gomez, C. (2024). Unpacking the Construction of Online Identities of Hybristophilia Communities on TikTok. *Deviant Behavior*, 46(2), 179–194.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2024.2338273>

Psychological Factors Leading to Sextortion: The Role of Personality, Emotional Factors, and Sexual Needs in Victimisation

This exploratory study examines psychological factors that may make individuals more susceptible to becoming victims of sextortion. It focuses on personality traits, emotional factors, and sexual needs as potential predictors.

C. Tzani, M. Ioannou, R. Fletcher, T.J.V. Williams, Psychological factors leading to sextortion: The role of personality, emotional factors and sexual needs in victimisation, *Comput. Hum. Behav.* 159 (2024) 108323, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2024.108323>.

Artificially Disinformed and Radicalised: How AI Produced Disinformation Could Encourage Radicalisation

The study explores the potential for AI-generated disinformation to contribute to the radicalisation of individuals. It discusses how such disinformation can undermine truth perception and exacerbate radicalisation risks.

Williams, T.J.V, Ioannou, M., & Tzani, C. (2024). Artificially Disinformed and Radicalised: How AI produced disinformation could encourage radicalisation. *Assessment and Development Matters*, 16(1), 29-34. <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsadm.2024.16.1.29>

Greek sexting landscape: Uncovering consequences beyond the selfie

Focusing on Greece, this research examines the sexting behaviors of individuals and the consequences that extend beyond the act itself. It delves into the psychological, social, and legal ramifications of sexting in the Greek context.

Ntountoumi, L., Ioannou, M., Synnott, J., Tzani, C., Morelli, M., Chirumbolo, A., & Drouin, M. (2024). Greek sexting landscape: Uncovering consequences beyond the selfie. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, e1642. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jip.1642>

Consequences of online sextortion on victims: Findings from open-access data and an online survey

This study analyzes the impact of online sextortion on victims, utilizing open-access data and survey responses. It highlights the emotional, psychological, and social consequences faced by victims of sextortion.

Fletcher, R., Tzani, C., & Ioannou, M. (2024). Consequences of online sextortion on victims: Findings from open-access data and an online survey. *Assessment and Development Matters*, 16(2), 36-43. <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsadm.2024.16.2.36>

The dark side of Artificial Intelligence–Risks arising in dating applications

This article explores the potential risks associated with the use of artificial intelligence in dating applications. It discusses how AI can be exploited for malicious purposes, including deception and manipulation, posing threats to users' safety and privacy.

Fletcher, R., Tzani, C., & Ioannou, M. (2024). The dark side of Artificial Intelligence – Risks arising in dating applications. *Assessment and Development Matters*, 16(1), 17-23. <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsadm.2024.16.1.17>

Time to Bear Arms: An Exploration of Time Suspensions Between Lone Mass Shooting Attacks in the US and When the Perpetrator Acquired Their Weapons

The paper examines the time intervals between the acquisition of weapons and the execution of lone mass shootings in the US. It aims to identify patterns that could inform preventive strategies.

Williams, T. J. V., Tzani, C., & Ioannou, M. (2024). Time to Bear Arms: An Exploration of Time Suspensions Between Lone Mass Shooting Attacks in the US and When the Perpetrator Acquired Their Weapons. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 1–9.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2024.2389571>

Understanding the variation in offender behaviour and risk factors in cases of homicide perpetrated against the UK homeless population between the years 2000 and 2022

This study examines homicide cases involving homeless victims in the UK from 2000 to 2022. It analyzes offender behaviors and identifies risk factors associated with these crimes, aiming to inform protective measures for vulnerable populations.

Ross, E., Synnott, J., Ioannou, M., Ashton, S.-A., & Tunsi, A. (2024). Understanding the variation in offender behaviour and risk factors in cases of homicide perpetrated against the uk homeless population between the years 2000 and 2022. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, 21(2), e1627. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jip.1627>

#NoFilter: The Impact of Social Media Body Dysmorphic Disorder in Adults

This study examines the relationship between social media usage and body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) symptoms in adults. The findings reveal a positive correlation between increased social media usage and symptoms of body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. Platforms like Snapchat

and Instagram, which are image-centric, exhibited higher levels of body dissatisfaction among users.

Ioannou, M., Tzani, C., Price, P., Walker, F., Williams, T. J. V., & Fumagalli, A. (2024). #NoFilter: The impact of Social Media Body Dysmorphic Disorder in Adults. *Mental Health Science*, 2(4), [e89]. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mhs2.89>

Unpacking Environmental Activism in the UK: A Comparative Analysis of the Groups Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil

This research focuses on two prominent environmental activism groups in the UK: Extinction Rebellion (XR) and Just Stop Oil (JSO). The study compares their strategies, goals, and public perceptions, providing insights into the dynamics of grassroots environmental movements and their impact on policy and society.

Williams, T.J.V., & Tamayo Gomez, C. (2024). Unpacking Environmental Activism in the UK: A Comparative Analysis of the Groups Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil. In B. Tejerina, C. Miranda de Almeida, & C. Acuña (Eds.), *International Conference Socioecos 2024: Climate change, sustainability and socio-ecological practices* (pp. 175-184). University of the Basque Country.

Femicide in Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 lockdown: A model for differentiating male offender characteristics

This research analyzes femicide cases in Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 lockdown, identifying two primary offender profiles: "Chronic Criminal Abuser" and "Mentally Disturbed." It discusses the socio-cultural factors contributing to femicide and suggests targeted interventions.

Johnston, R., Synnott, J., Ioannou, M., & Ashton, S.-A. (2024). Femicide in Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 lockdown: A model for differentiating male offender characteristics. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, 21(1), 52–67. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jip.1623>

How Does Language Influence the Radicalisation Process? A Systematic Review of Research Exploring Online Extremist Communication and Discussion

This systematic review examines how language used in extremist online spaces contributes to radicalisation. It identifies five linguistic behaviors (Algorithmic, Conflict, Hate, Positive, and Recruitment) that extremists employ to influence individuals. The study highlights the role of language in facilitating radicalisation through online platforms.

Williams, T. J. V., & Tzani, C. (2023). How does language influence the radicalisation process? A systematic review of research exploring online extremist communication and discussion. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 16(3), 310–330. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2022.2104910>

The Effect on Wellbeing of Watching Pleasant and Aggressive Videos

This research investigates the impact of watching pleasant and aggressive videos on individuals' wellbeing. The study finds that exposure to aggressive content can have negative consequences for mental health and wellbeing, suggesting that violent and aggressive media content poses a threat to public health.

Vaughan, B., Tzani, C., Ioannou, M., & Williams, T. (2023). The effect on wellbeing of watching pleasant and aggressive videos. *Assessment and Development Matters*, 15(3), 19-23. <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsadm.2023.15.3.19>

Policy vs Reality: Comparing the Policies of Social Media Sites and Users' Experiences, in the Context of Exposure to Extremist Content

This study investigates the discrepancy between social media platforms' policies on extremist content and users' actual experiences. Findings reveal that users often encounter hate speech and extremist communication despite existing policies, indicating a gap between policy and practice

Williams, T. J. V., Tzani, C., Gavin, H., & Ioannou, M. (2023). Policy vs reality: comparing the policies of social media sites and users' experiences, in the context of exposure to extremist content. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 17(1), 110–127.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2023.2195466>

Foreshadowing Terror: Exploring the Time of Online Manifestos Prior to Lone Wolf Attacks

This research explores the timing between the publication of online manifestos by lone actors and the execution of their attacks. It aims to identify patterns that could serve as early warning signs for impending attacks

Williams, T. J. V., Tzani, C., & Ioannou, M. (2023). Foreshadowing Terror: Exploring the Time of Online Manifestos Prior to Lone Wolf Attacks. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 1–12.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2023.2205973>

Cyberbullying in the UK: The Effect of Global Crises on the Victimization Rates

The study assesses the impact of global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on cyberbullying rates in the UK. Results indicate a decline in cyber-victimization and perpetration during lockdowns compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Peck, H. C., Tzani, C., Lester, D., Williams, T. J. V., & Page, J. (2023). Cyberbullying in the UK: The Effect of Global Crises on the Victimization Rates. *Journal of School Violence*, 23(1), 111–123.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2023.2278473>

‘No One Believed Me, and I Have No Proof’: An Exploration into the Experiences of Spiking Victims

This mixed-method study explores the experiences of individuals who have been victims of drink spiking. It highlights the challenges victims face, including disbelief from others and lack of evidence, which hinder reporting and support.

Stephenson, L., Tzani, C., Ioannou, M., Synnott, J., Williams, T. J. V., & Morelli, M. (2023). ‘No One Believed Me, and I Have No proof’: An Exploration into the Experiences of Spiking Victims. *Deviant Behavior*, 45(5), 642–655. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2023.2260924>

Trafficking Trauma: A Review on the Psychological Effects of Human Trafficking

This review delves into the psychological consequences of human trafficking on victims. It discusses various forms of trauma experienced and emphasizes the need for appropriate psychological interventions post-trafficking.

Pascale, R.I., Tzani, C., Ioannou, M., Williams, T.J.V. and Hunt, D. (2024), "Trafficking trauma: a review on the psychological effects of human trafficking", *Mental Health and Social Inclusion*, Vol. 28 No. 2, pp. 144-161. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MHSI-03-2023-0026>

Cybersuicide: Online-Assisted Suicide

The study investigates the phenomenon of cybersuicide, where individuals seek or receive assistance for suicide through online platforms. It analyses final communications to understand the role of the internet in facilitating suicide

Moir, CL., Tzani, C., Ioannou, M. et al. Cybersuicide: Online-Assisted Suicide. *J Police Crim Psych* 38, 879–891 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-023-09602-5>

Prison Officers' Perceptions of Prisoner Male Rape Victims in England and Wales

This study explores the attitudes and perceptions of prison officers towards male inmates who have been victims of sexual assault. Findings indicate that while officers do not accept societal myths about male rape, some hold negative attitudes towards such incidents occurring in prison.

Brown, H.L., Tzani, C., Fumagalli, A. et al. Prison Officers' Perceptions of Prisoner Male Rape Victims in England and Wales. *J Police Crim Psych* 38, 931–941 (2023).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-022-09545-3>

Profiling HMRC and IRS Scammers by Utilising Trolling Videos: The Scam Script

This research profiles scammers impersonating tax authorities by analyzing trolling videos to understand common scam scripts. It provides insights into the characteristics and tactics of such scammers.

Tzani, C., Ioannou, M., Lester, D. et al. Profiling HMRC and IRS Scammers by Utilising Trolling Videos: the Scam Script. *J Police Crim Psych* 38, 395–412 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-022-09520-y>

Religion, Mental Health, and Terrorism: Public Perception

This study examines public perceptions regarding the roles of religion and mental health in terrorism. The research finds that while there is a common belief linking mental health disorders with terrorism, such associations are often based on misconceptions. The study calls for a more nuanced understanding and public education to address these perceptions.

Wildsmith, L., Williams, T. J. V., & Herbert, S. (2023). Religion, mental health, and terrorism: Public perception. *Assessment and Development Matters*, 15(4), 27-32. <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsadm.2023.15.4.27>

Investigating the Influence of Perpetrator Gender on Public Perceptions and Media Portrayals of Teacher-Student Sexual Relationships

This study analyzes how the gender of perpetrators affects public perception and media representation of teacher-student sexual relationships. It highlights potential biases in societal and media responses.

Houghton, C., Tzani, C., Ioannou, M. *et al.* (2023). Investigating the Influence of Perpetrator Gender on Public Perceptions and Media Portrayals of Teacher-Student Sexual Relationships. *J Police Crim Psych* 38, 754–765. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-023-09606-1>

Under review

Dating Applications, Pornography, and the Dark Triad as factors for Sexual Violence.

Boon, C., Ioannou, M. & Tzani, C., Williams T.J.V.

Attitudes towards the Criminal Justice System and attitudes towards prisoners: a comparison between the UK and Germany.

Burgermeister, R, Tzani, C, Ioannou, M, Williams, T.J.V. & Kissaun G.D

Detecting Deception by Using the Concealed Information Test

Tzani C., Synnott., J. Fumagalli., A., Ioannou M., Petreca., V. & Williams T.J.V.

How the Sarah Everard Case has Changed Public Perceptions of Police Officers

Herbert, S. R. J., Ioannou, M., Tzani, C., Fletcher, R., & Williams, T. J. V.

The Relationship Between Global Crises and Aggression

Charlesworth T, Tzani C, Synnott J, Ioannou M, Fanti K.A, Stavrinides P & Williams T.J.V.

Love in the Framework of Human Motivation: A Maslowian Exploration

Ioannou, M., Tzani, C., Synnott, J., Williams, T.J.V., Fletcher, R., Alabbassi, M., Dodaj, A., Sesar, K., Drouin., Kissaun, G., Cattelino, E., Chirumbolo, A., Baiocco, R., Nappa, M., Rosaria, M., Mara; Artinopoulou, V., Ntountoumi., L

How the actions of fictional characters influence copycat offenders

Rogers, L., Ioannou, M., Tzani, C., Williams, T.J.V & Synnott, J.

The gamification of love: An exploration into online dating and its effect on mental wellbeing, loneliness and relationship-contingent self-esteem.

Tzani C, Ioannou, Williams, T.J.V, Synnott, J, Drouin, M, Artinopoulou, V, Ntountoumi, L, Dodaj, A, Cattelino, E, Chirumbolo, A, Baiocco, R, Nappa, M.R, Morelli, M, Sesar, K & Kissaun, G.D

Experiences of Online Radicalisation – Exploring the extent to which individuals, aged sixteen and over, are exposed to extreme content online and the perceptions that online users hold following their personal experiences.

Holt, L, Williams, T.J.V, Tzani, C, Ioannou, M, Lester, D, Roger, L, Synnott, J. & Althuwaikh, A.F

Exploring Perceptions and Risk Factors in Image-Based Sexual Abuse Among the Greek Public

Chymas, A, Ioannou, M, Tzani, C, Lester, D, Rogers L, Williams, T, J, V & Artinopoulou, V.

The Exploration of Cyber Sexual Violence, Personality Traits, and the Consequences for Mental Health and Well-Being

Stock, H, Ioannou, M, Tzani, C, Lester, D, Rogers, L & Williams, T.J.V

The Neurological Causes of Pathological Jealousy in Romantic Relationships.

Stone, E, Ioannou, M, Tzani, C, Lester, D, Rogers, L, Williams, T.J.V & Aday, S

Projects

International collaboration for examining educators' bullying experiences by students in academia.

Project Overview

This international study investigates the prevalence, nature, and impacts of adult bullying within academic institutions, particularly when the perpetrator is a student or fellow staff member. The research explores different forms of bullying, including physical, cyber, sexual, racial, political, gender-based, and appearance-based harassment. It aims to deepen understanding of the power dynamics that enable such behaviours and their psychological, professional, and social consequences for the victims.

Methodology

Participants aged 18 and over are recruited via social media to complete an online survey hosted on Qualtrics. The survey combines demographic questions with both open-ended and closed-form items to assess various bullying experiences.

Progress and Outlook

The study is ongoing with data being collected across multiple countries, aiming for at least 250 responses per country. Collaborators are actively engaged in dissemination and data collection, contributing to a valuable cross-cultural dataset that will inform future institutional policy and support services.

Collecting data in five countries (UK, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece and Malta).

International collaboration for investigating the prevalence and impacts of non-consensual filming

Project Overview

This timely research explores the rising issue of non-consensual filming in public, particularly in nightlife settings. It focuses on how individuals—often women—are recorded without consent, with such content frequently shared online. The study addresses the emotional, social, and behavioural impacts of this practice, as well as public perceptions of safety and the legality surrounding public filming.

Key Objectives

- Understand how widespread non-consensual filming is and in what contexts it occurs
- Investigate the emotional and behavioural impacts on victims
- Gauge public opinion on preventative measures and legal responses
- Explore how social norms shape attitudes toward public filming

Methodology

An online survey collects both quantitative and qualitative data, focusing on participants' experiences, emotional responses, and opinions. The survey is designed by the research team and distributed through the network of collaborators.

Progress and Outlook

With a target sample size of 250 respondents per country, this project is generating essential insights into an emerging social phenomenon. The results are expected to inform policy, digital ethics discussions, and safety campaigns around social media use and personal privacy.

Collecting data in seven countries (UK, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, USA, Italy & Malta)

International collaboration for examining the risks associated with the use of online dating platforms

Project Overview

This cross-cultural research explores the use of online dating platforms and the potential risks associated with them. The study aims to identify behavioural trends, cultural differences, and the safety challenges users face while engaging in online dating.

Focus Areas Likely Include

- Variations in dating app use across cultures
- Types and prevalence of online risks, such as catfishing, harassment, and data misuse
- User awareness and protective behaviours
- Psychological and social outcomes of online dating interactions

Methodology

Data is being collected through an online survey disseminated internationally. The sample aims for at least 250 participants per country, ensuring a rich comparative analysis across different cultural contexts.

Progress and Outlook

Data collection phase completed one published paper, three papers awaiting review, further papers are under development.

This study has the potential to offer important findings for platform developers, educators, and public safety advocates, particularly regarding digital literacy and cross-cultural safety standards in online relationships.

Projects in development

Online misogyny and its psychological consequences

This research project explores how people experience, witness, and make sense of misogyny on online platforms. Through open-ended interviews, the study aims to understand the psychological and social impact of encountering or engaging with gender-based hostility in digital spaces. Participants will be asked to reflect on their personal experiences, perceptions, and thoughts about the broader cultural and technological factors that may influence online misogyny. By gathering diverse perspectives, the research hopes to uncover patterns in how online misogyny is perceived, justified, or challenged, and to better understand its effects on individuals.

Susceptibility to consumption

This project aims to assess how susceptible people are to believing information they encounter on social media by analysing both their media consumption habits and various personality traits. As social media becomes a primary source of news and information, understanding how individuals process and trust content is critical in addressing misinformation. To achieve this, we will conduct a survey that gathers information on participants' social media usage, including the platforms they use, the types of content they consume, and their preferred sources of news. Additionally, we will measure key personality factors such as openness to new experiences, loneliness, resilience etc.

Once upon a crime: A case study analysis of dating applications and violent sexual crime

To identify any potential commonalities and/or differences between case studies that involved a sexual crime where dating applications were involved either prior or during the crime. Disseminate an online survey. The survey will consist of open-ended questions regarding the phenomena explored, specifically before the crime was committed.

Grant Applications

The Cyberpsychology Research Network (CRN) is developing a strong track record of competitive research funding applications and continues to expand its funding portfolio to support impactful, interdisciplinary research.

ISRF Flexible Grants for Small Groups (FG10)

Submitted November 2023

Project Title: *Identifying Intent: Analysing the Language of Lone Actor Manifestos*

Investigators: Ioannou, M., Tzani-Pepelasi, K., Artinopoulou, V., Parkinson, S., Stavriniades, P., Darmanin-Kissaun, G., Williams, T.J.V.

Amount: £6,900

This collaborative project sought funding to examine linguistic markers in the manifestos of lone actors, with the aim of identifying pre-incident indicators of ideological violence and intent. The interdisciplinary team includes experts in forensic psychology, linguistics, and criminology.

The Leverhulme Trust – Early Career Fellowship

Submitted February 2025

Project Title: *Exploring Pre-Event Identification Markers for Suicidal Ideation and Violence*

Principal Investigator: Williams, T.J.V.

Amount: £92,013

This fellowship application proposed a three-year programme of research focusing on early psychological and linguistic indicators of individuals at risk of committing self-directed or interpersonal violence, aiming to inform intervention strategies and improve safeguarding protocols.

Nuffield Foundation – Research Development & Analysis Fund (Outline Application)

Submitted March 2025

Project Title: *Algorithms & Circular Causality: Impact of Online Media on Mental Health*

Investigators: Tzani-Pepelasi, K., Ioannou, M., Peebles, D., Parkinson, S., Tachmazidis, I., Williams, T.J.V.

Amount: £196,776

This proposed study aims to investigate how algorithmically curated content influences mental health outcomes, particularly among young people. The project integrates psychological theory with computational modelling to understand feedback loops in online behaviour and emotional wellbeing.

UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship (Expression of Interest – Internal Submission)

Submitted April 2025

Project Title: *AI-Driven Safeguarding: Enhancing Online Safety Through Psychological Analysis of Violent and Discriminatory Language*

Principal Investigator: Williams, T.J.V.

This internally submitted EOI proposed an ambitious, cross-disciplinary fellowship focused on leveraging AI and psychological expertise to develop tools that detect online harm in real-time, with implications for law enforcement, platform moderation, and digital policy.

ESRC New Investigator Grant – Responsive Mode (Round Two)

Submitted April 2025

Project Title: *Exploring Pre-Event Identification Markers for Suicidal Ideation and Violence*

Investigators: Williams, T.J.V., Ioannou, M., Tzani-Pepelasi, K. & Synnott, J.

Amount: £249,708

This project builds on prior research to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based framework for identifying individuals at risk before a violent or suicidal event occurs. The study incorporates psychological profiling, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement to inform public health and safety initiatives.

The Wellcome Trust Early-Career Award

Submitted May 2025

Project Title: *Exploring pre-event identification markers for suicidal ideation and violence*

Investigators: Williams, T.J.V.

Amount: £252,032

This project builds on prior research to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based framework for identifying individuals at risk before a violent or suicidal event occurs. The study incorporates psychological profiling, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement to inform public health and safety initiatives.

Grants Pending Decision (as of May 2025)

- **ISRF Small Groups Grant** – *Identifying Intent: Language of Lone Actor Manifestos* (£6,900)
- **Nuffield Foundation (Outline)** – *Algorithms & Mental Health* (£196,776)
- **ESRC New Investigator Grant** – *Pre-Event Identification of Suicidal and Violent Behaviour* (£249,708)
- **The Wellcome Trust** - *Exploring pre-event identification markers for suicidal ideation and violence.* (£252,032)

Forthcoming Submissions (planned 2025–2026)

- UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship (Full Submission)
- Horizon Europe Collaborative Research Grant (Cross-border online safety initiative)
- Home Office / Research England fund – Digital safeguarding pilot project
- Wellcome Trust – Digital mental health and online trauma project
- NIHR – Online harms and adolescent wellbeing study (in preparation)

Target Funders

- UKRI (including ESRC, EPSRC, and AHRC)
- Horizon Europe / Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
- Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Department for Education
- Wellcome Trust
- Nuffield Foundation

- British Academy
- NIHR
- Google.org / Meta Research Partnerships (for tech/online safety initiatives)

External Relationships

The CRN has established a very strong network of international collaborators and has built strong relationships with numerous professionals, public and private organisations and businesses around the world. Their research contacts are extensive covering Asia through to Middle East, Europe and the United States:

- Academics ltd
- Arizona State University, USA
- Chinese Academy of Sciences, China
- Dublin City University, Ireland
- Indiana University, USA
- King Saud University, Saudi Arabia
- Lomonosow Moscow State University, Russia
- Medical University-Varna, Bulgaria, Bulgaria
- MEF University, Istanbul, Turkey
- Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey
- Palacky University Olomouc, Czech Republic
- Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Greece
- Purdue University Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA
- Sapienza University of Rome

- Sechenov University, Russia
- Socioecos, Basque Country
- Stockton University, USA
- University of Antwerp, Belgium
- University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, USA
- University of Central Arkansas, USA
- University of Cyprus
- University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, USA
- University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- University of Malta
- University of Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA
- University of San Francisco, USA
- University of Texas at Arlington, USA
- University of Valle D'Aosta, Italy
- University West, Sweden
- University of Wrocław, Wrocław, Poland
- University of Zadar, Croatia

Media Mentions and Expert Contributions

Expert Commentary – 20 Minutes (France)

Provided psychological insights in the Valentine's Day feature article, “*Why do the 'Deadpool Killer' and so many other murderers have real groupies?*”. The piece explores the phenomenon of Hybristophilia and society’s fascination with notorious criminals, using our expertise to explain the underlying psychological mechanisms and the media’s role in romanticizing violent offenders.

<https://www.20minutes.fr/societe/4137443-20250214-saint-valentin-pourquoi-deadpool-killer-tant-autres-meurtriers-veritables-groupies#mbrs-comments-container>

Expert Commentary – L’Express (France)

Offered analysis in the investigative report “*Media excitement, unequal health system: The Luigi Mangione affair in infographics*”. Our commentary contributed to unpacking the sociopolitical and systemic implications of the case, focusing on how media narratives and structural health inequalities intersect in public perception.

<https://www.lexpress.fr/monde/amerique/emballement-mediatique-systeme-de-sante-inegalitaire-laffaire-luigi-mangione-en-infographies-3NFARJKOSZGSFPLDQQLZUXUVAE/>

Research Mention – Stimson Center Issue Brief

Our research was cited in the report “*Social Media Mis-/Disinformation and the Risk of Atrocities in the United States*”, published by the Stimson Center. The brief examines the role of online platforms in the spread of harmful narratives that may contribute to mass violence, referencing our findings on the psychological and social impact of misinformation.

<https://www.stimson.org/2023/social-media-mis-disinformation-and-the-risk-of-atrocities-in-the-united-states/>

Research Mention – The Academic

Our work on *gender bias in media portrayals of teacher-student sexual misconduct* was highlighted in a feature exploring how narrative framing influences public attitudes and legal outcomes. The article emphasizes our contribution to challenging harmful

stereotypes and promoting equitable discourse.

<https://theacademic.com/gender-bias-in-teacher-student-sexual-crimes/#:~:text=Key%20findings,opinions%20towards%20these%20inappropriate%20relationships.>

Research Highlight – ABC News (Australia)

Featured prominently in the ABC article “*Here are some important things you should know about drink and needle spiking*”. The article draws on our recent study debunking common myths around drink spiking, providing evidence-based recommendations to improve public understanding and safety.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-11-18/drink-spiking-needle-spiking-misconceptions-research/104460318>

Research Discussion – Psicología y Mente (Spain)

Our research into Hybristophilia was referenced in a widely shared article on *why people are attracted to criminals*. The piece, published in *Psicología y Mente*, contextualizes our work within broader psychological theories of attraction and deviant behaviour.

<https://www.publico.es/psicologia-y-mente/hibrisofilia-por-que-nos-atraen-los-criminales/>

Interview – ClickDealer Blog

Participated in an expert interview for “*Digital Love Revolution: The Future of Online Dating*”, contributing insights into how digital platforms are reshaping intimacy, relationship dynamics, and social expectations in the modern era.

<https://blog.clickdealer.com/digital-love-revolution-the-future-of-online-dating/>

External Output

Invited Speaker – Metropolitan Police (UK)

Delivered a tailored presentation on the psychological pathways and mechanisms involved in *online radicalisation*, drawing from current empirical research. The session

was part of the Met Police's continuing professional development program and focused on improving law enforcement's understanding of digital extremism, vulnerability factors, and preventive strategies.

Conference Presentation – 23rd Annual Conference of the European Society of Criminology (Florence, Italy, 2023)

Presented original research at one of Europe's leading criminology forums, engaging with an international audience of academics and practitioners. The presentation contributed to critical discussions on digital deviance, radicalisation, and the criminological implications of online subcultures.

Conference Presentation – International Conference Socioecos (Bilbao, Spain, 2024)

Presented research at the *Socioecos 2024* conference, which focused on interdisciplinary issues at the intersection of society, ecology, and emerging sociotechnical risks. The talk examined how social media ecosystems contribute to the spread of disinformation and influence individual susceptibility to extremist narratives.

Conference Presentation – Thames Valley Police VAWG Conference (Invited) (Reading, 2024)

Was invited to present on sextortion & suicide

Conference presentations – 19th Annual conference of the International Academy of Investigative Psychology (Santiago de Compostella, 2024)

Presented three papers on sextortion, sexual homicide of children and knife crime.

Keynote speaker – Forensic Conference Andrew Simms (2024)

Presented on psychopathology of sex offenders

Events Organised

Hosted Event – Cyberpsychology Conference 2025 (University of Huddersfield)

Organised and hosted the *Cyberpsychology Conference 2025* at the University of Huddersfield in April. The event brought together leading researchers, practitioners, and law enforcement professionals to explore the psychological dimensions of digital life, including online harm, radicalisation, disinformation, and human-computer interaction.

Upcoming expansion plans

Formalisation of Partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)

In alignment with the University of Huddersfield's strategic focus on internationalisation and interdisciplinary collaboration, key academic and institutional partnerships will be formalised through MOUs. These agreements will strengthen cross-border cooperation in the field of cyberpsychology and support collaborative research, student mobility, and the exchange of expertise. These partnerships will lay the groundwork for joint grant applications, conference participation and co-authored publications, enhancing the university's global research profile.

Development of Masters Programme in the area of Cyberpsychology

Design and validate a new MSc in the area of Cyberpsychology, a postgraduate programme that supports the University of Huddersfield's commitment to research-informed teaching and future-focused curriculum development. The course addresses pressing global issues such as online harms, digital addiction, misinformation, and AI ethics. It also aims to meet growing industry and public sector demand for psychological expertise in digital contexts, positioning the university at the forefront of an emerging and socially impactful discipline.

Establishment of a Cyberpsychology Research Centre

The creation of a dedicated *Cyberpsychology Research Centre* will position the University of Huddersfield as a UK leader in research on human behaviour in digital

environments. This interdisciplinary hub will bring together academics from behavioural sciences, computing, media studies and other relevant fields, to conduct research on online harms, disinformation, radicalisation, AI-human interaction, and digital wellbeing. The Centre will attract external research funding, host high-profile events, and serve as a point of contact for policymakers and practitioners seeking expert insight into digital behaviour.

Development of Short Courses and CPD Modules

In response to growing demand for digital behaviour expertise in professional settings, a suite of short courses and CPD (Continuing Professional Development) modules will be developed. These will be aimed at law enforcement, educators, social workers, tech developers, clinicians, and safeguarding leads.

PhD Studentships and Doctoral Training Pathway in Cyberpsychology

Establishing funded doctoral studentships aligned with core themes in cyberpsychology (e.g., digital identity, online risk, virtual relationships) will support high-impact research while building capacity within the academic community. A formal doctoral training pathway will be developed, linked with national research councils or collaborative doctoral partnerships (CDPs), to provide structured interdisciplinary training in both theoretical and applied cyberpsychology.

Policy Engagement and Impact Consultancy

Building on existing public-facing work, a formal policy and consultancy unit will be created to offer evidence-based advice on digital behaviour to government departments, charities, think tanks, and tech companies.

Strategic Industry Collaborations

Develop formal partnerships with tech companies, digital platforms, cybersecurity firms, online safety NGOs, and healthcare providers to co-design research, interventions, and educational resources. These partnerships will support joint publications, tool development (e.g., early warning systems for online threats), and placement opportunities for students. Collaborations with organisations like Ofcom,

Internet Matters, or the Online Safety Tech Industry Association (OSTIA) could expand the university's influence in shaping safer digital environments.

Joint Degrees or Dual Qualifications

To enhance the university's postgraduate offering and attract international students, joint or dual-degree programmes could be established.

Public Outreach and Digital Literacy Campaigns

CRN aims to take a leading role in public education through a *Digital Literacy and Online Safety Campaign*. Examples include:

- a. Hosting public lectures and community workshops
- b. Developing online toolkits and infographics
- c. Partnering with schools and local councils
- d. Engaging with national media

Alignment with National Higher Education Frameworks: REF, KEF, TEF

The activities and outputs of the Cyberpsychology Research Network (CRN) directly support the University of Huddersfield's strategic objectives under the UK's three key higher education frameworks: the Research Excellence Framework (REF), Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

Research Excellence Framework (REF)

CRN contributes to REF by:

- Producing a high volume of peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary, and internationally recognised publications in cyberpsychology, forensic psychology, and digital behaviour.
- Developing impactful research focused on real-world problems such as online radicalisation, disinformation, online sexual exploitation, and digital harms.

- Supporting REF impact case studies through evidence of influence on:
 - Law enforcement practices (e.g., CPD with the Police).
 - Media reporting (e.g., international coverage in ABC News).
 - Policy recommendations (e.g., cited in Stimson Centre brief on atrocities and disinformation).

Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)

CRN actively contributes to knowledge exchange by:

- Building partnerships with law enforcement, NGOs, educators, and tech sector stakeholders to co-develop tools, training, and policy-informed interventions.
- Organising public-facing events, such as the Cyberpsychology Conference 2025, which facilitated interdisciplinary dialogue across academia, practice, and public policy.
- Developing pathways for consultancy and advisory services on online safety, digital behaviour analysis, and platform risk assessment, strengthening external engagement.

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

CRN enhances teaching and student success by:

- Involving postgraduate and doctoral researchers in active projects, publications, and international collaborations, supporting employability and experiential learning.
- Creating future CPD modules and short courses for professionals in safeguarding, education, digital regulation, and mental health sectors, expanding access to applied psychological knowledge.

Institutional Value

The Cyberpsychology Research Network (CRN) is a strategic asset to the University of Huddersfield, advancing multiple institutional priorities across research, teaching, engagement, and global visibility.

Enhancing Global Research Profile

- CRN has established formal and informal collaborations with over 30 international institutions across Europe, Africa, Middle East, North America, Asia, and the Middle East.
- Active involvement in cross-border research projects, EU conferences, and multi-author international publications strengthens the university's position in global cyberpsychology and behavioural digital science.

Civic Engagement & Knowledge Transfer

- CRN delivers public impact through expert contributions to media, law enforcement training, and policy consultation.
- Hosted the Cyberpsychology Conference 2025, engaging public sector stakeholders, NGOs, and tech industry representatives.
- Planning public outreach campaigns on digital literacy, safety, and online wellbeing.

External Partnerships & Industry Relevance

- Actively working to formalise partnerships through MOUs with academic and non-academic bodies.
- Exploring consultancy and applied research opportunities with tech platforms, law enforcement, and public health organisations.
- Laying groundwork for long-term knowledge exchange income and externally funded collaboration.

Closing Remarks

As the Cyberpsychology Research Network (CRN) concludes its first full year of activity, this report reflects not only our significant academic achievements but also our evolving role as a driver of meaningful impact in a digital-first world.

Over the past year, CRN has grown rapidly, from a concept to a vibrant research collective with international reach, multi-disciplinary expertise, and deep engagement with pressing social challenges. Our work has explored the psychological dimensions of radicalisation, disinformation, digital exploitation, and online wellbeing. The diversity of our research, from examining the language of lone actor manifestos to exploring AI-driven safeguarding, demonstrates the scope and relevance of cyberpsychology in today's society.

This period has been marked by successful collaborations, innovative projects, and a strong presence in the public conversation around digital harm and safety. The volume and quality of our output, including over 30 peer-reviewed publications, multiple competitive grant applications and regular media commentary, highlight the productivity and dedication of our network.

Looking forward, CRN is strategically positioned for further expansion. We aim to deepen our research capacity through doctoral training pathways, the launch of our MSc in the area of Cyberpsychology and the establishment of a dedicated Cyberpsychology Research Centre. These developments will enhance our ability to support the next generation of researchers while also strengthening the university's reputation for innovation in psychological science and digital safety.

We remain committed to building partnerships that cross traditional boundaries, between disciplines, sectors, and nations. In doing so, we reaffirm our core purpose: to generate knowledge that not only advances academic understanding but also improves real-world outcomes for individuals, communities and institutions navigating life online.

We are grateful to our collaborators, funders, students, and institutional partners who continue to support and shape our work. The challenges of the digital age require evidence-based solutions grounded in psychological insight, and CRN is proud to be part of that response.

We look forward to the next year with ambition, purpose, and a strong foundation from which to grow.

On behalf of the CRN team

*Professor Maria Ioannou & Dr Calli Tzani
Co-Directors, Cyberpsychology Research Network*

*Dr Thomas Williams
Research Fellow*

University of Huddersfield