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**Navigating The Incel Community: An  
In-Depth Analysis of Incel  
Subcultures in Contemporary Social  
Psychology**

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Abstract:

This dissertation aims to provide an analysis of toxic masculinity within contemporary social psychology, focusing on the Incel (involuntary celibate) community inside the Manosphere. Toxic masculinity refers to a set of cultural norms and behaviours that promote harmful and restrictive expectations of masculinity, often perpetuating misogyny and aggression. This dissertation delves into the historical context, psychological factors, and societal implications of the Incel subculture to gain a deeper understanding of its development and impact. Utilising interdisciplinary research methods, including qualitative content analysis and clinical psychological frameworks, this thesis seeks to contribute to a broader discourse on gender and masculinity, as well as to propose strategies for addressing toxic masculinity in today's society.

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## **Introduction**

In recent years, there has been a burgeoning interest in the concept of toxic masculinity within the realms of psychology, sociology, and gender studies. This phenomenon, which encompasses various manifestations across different subcultures and online communities, has garnered considerable attention for its societal implications. Of particular concern is the examination of Involuntary Celibate (Incel) communities within the Manosphere, which serve as a focal point for understanding how toxic masculinity is expressed, perpetuated, and its repercussions on individuals and society (Ging, 2019). The term "Incel" denotes individuals who self-identify as involuntarily celibate, reflecting their struggle to establish romantic or sexual relationships (Tolentino, 2018). Regrettably, certain members of the Incel community have been associated with instances of mass violence, thereby amplifying scrutiny on this subgroup. Noteworthy cases, such as those of Elliot Rodger in 2014, who perpetrated a mass shooting in Isla Vista, California (BBC, 2018). Moreover, there is a troubling trend of increasing identification with the Incel community and even admiration for individuals who have engaged in acts of mass violence, such as Elliot Rodger. The shooter's unjustifiable actions are being not only condoned but also celebrated within Incel subcultures (Baele, 2021). Further exploration of this phenomenon will be conducted later in this dissertation; however, it is crucial to acknowledge now how their pervasive sense of dissatisfaction stems from societal factors, contributing to a heightened sense of interpersonal victimhood, particularly pronounced among incels compared to non-incele individuals (Costello et al., 2022). Online forums serve as pivotal platforms for disseminating these extremist and misogynistic ideologies (Young, 2019). They exploit features such as anonymity and the echo chamber effect (Cinelli, 2021), amplifying the propagation of harmful beliefs (Salojärvi, 2020; Gaudette, 2022, Ganesh, 2018). The echo chamber effect in social media refers to the phenomenon where individuals are exposed primarily to information and viewpoints that align with their existing beliefs and opinions, leading to reinforcement and amplification of those perspectives while limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints. This phenomenon has significant psychological implications, potentially contributing to polarisation, ideological extremism, and reduced critical thinking skills among users (Cinelli, 2021). Influential figures like Andrew Tate, an internet influencer, based his whole career on spreading misogynistic information on gender roles, perpetuating sexist ideologies and garnering significant online attention worldwide, especially from the younger generations. It's important to address the appeal of these ideologies and of the role models expressing them, especially for young people who seem to be the most involved in these

spaces (Bubola et. al., 2023). Within the broader cultural landscape known as the "Manosphere," a complex online network has emerged, encompassing diverse ideologies such as Pick-Up Artist (PUA) culture, Men's Rights Activism (MRA), and the Red Pill philosophy, as delineated by Ging (2019). This cultural movement, inspired by the concept of taking the red pill as depicted in the movie "The Matrix," involves individuals subscribing to extremist, misogynistic, far-right, and at times violent ideologies (Crowley, 2022). In this metaphorical framework, taking the red pill symbolises embracing beliefs that attribute societal upheaval to the feminist movement, disrupting the once-established patriarchal order (Ging, 2019). Furthermore, individuals who adopt the blackpill perspective acknowledge systemic issues within society, leading to a fatalistic worldview where personal agency is perceived as futile (Williams, 2021). For Incels who become entangled in these ideologies, their perception of the world becomes deterministic, attributing their personal hardships solely to societal structures, thus impeding avenues for personal growth (Ging, 2019). This cultural network has garnered attention for espousing rigid and potentially harmful notions of masculinity, contributing significantly to discussions surrounding toxic masculinity within psychological discourse. The Manosphere encompasses a multifaceted online community centred around themes of masculinity, relationships, and men's issues, featuring diverse theories on masculinity such as the concepts of alphas, betas, and incels (Ging, 2019). The alpha male archetype, grounded in evolutionary psychology, portrays certain men as possessing dominant traits that render them more appealing to women and more successful in various aspects of life, characterised by traits like confidence, assertiveness, and physical prowess (Ging, 2019). Conversely, betas exhibit some alpha traits but lack the confidence and assertiveness associated with similar success, often perceived as more passive, submissive, and risk-averse (Ging, 2019). Incels, a subgroup within the Manosphere, are individuals who identify as unable to establish sexual or romantic relationships despite their desire for them, frequently attributing their relational struggles to external factors such as physical appearance or societal norms (Ging, 2019).

This dissertation endeavours to scrutinise Incel subcultures within the Manosphere through the lens of contemporary social and clinical psychology, aiming to enrich discussions surrounding toxic masculinity. It seeks to dissect the psychological, sociological, and cultural underpinnings of these subcultures, exploring their origins, manifestations, and societal implications. The inaugural chapter delves into the historical antecedents of toxic masculinity, highlighting the influence of online platforms and social media in perpetuating Manosphere and Incel ideologies, providing an in-depth exploration of the belief systems

within the incel community. Subsequently, the second chapter examines the Incel phenomenon, encompassing its identity formation, pertinent psychological factors associated with involuntary celibacy, manifestations of violence, and its ramifications for mental well-being. Lastly, the third and concluding chapter will probe the radicalization effect of social media specifically regarding the Incel ideology, with an eye towards proposing potential avenues for amelioration within this context.

## **Chapter 1: Toxic Masculinity and the Incel community in the Manosphere**

The term "toxic masculinity" has garnered significant attention in therapeutic, academic, and political spheres since the early 21st century (Harrington, 2021). It has been used to characterise men who espouse misogynistic, homophobic, or violent behaviours, rooted in a neoliberal strand of feminism emphasising individual empowerment without addressing broader societal structures (Messner, 2016). This concept underscores the negative attributes associated with certain forms of masculinity while often focusing on the individual rather than challenging underlying societal norms and systems. In essence, "toxic masculinity" serves as a broad descriptor for beliefs and actions perpetuating patriarchal and oppressive societal norms (Harrington, 2021). Therefore, it is imperative to approach the term critically, eschewing divisive categorizations of individuals and instead utilising it to gain insight into the societal implications of such behaviours and strategies for intervention.

Ging (2019) delineates the Manosphere into three major communities: Pick-Up Artists (PUA), individuals seeking strategies to pursue sexual encounters, often involving manipulation of women; Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), who reject romantic relationships altogether; and Incels, who attribute their inability to engage in sexual interactions to various factors, including themselves, society, and the aforementioned groups. This dissertation focuses on analysing the Incel community, given its association with a significant rise in problematic behaviours in offline contexts (Williams, 2021). Furthermore, the extreme and toxic ideologies characteristic of this group render them particularly pertinent for study within the domain of social psychology (Ging, 2019).

### **1.1 Toxic Masculinity: Definition and Frameworks**

Throughout history, responses to feminist movements have often been reactionary, leading to the emergence of movements such as "men's liberation" in the 1970s, which aimed to explore concepts of masculinity and manhood (Messner, 2016). However, these movements became divided into pro and anti-feminist factions, with the latter embracing more conservative values. Over time, the anti-feminist men's rights movement waned in prominence, as discourse surrounding gender equality gained traction (Ging, 2019). Messner (2016) identifies three significant changes contributing to the current political landscape: the professionalisation and institutionalisation of feminism, the ascendance of the neoliberal economy, and an increasing cultural sensitivity to feminist causes. These developments represent positive shifts toward dismantling patriarchal and oppressive societal norms, allowing for the liberation of women from cultural constraints that historically restricted their

freedom of choice. In the contemporary landscape of hyper-connectivity and evolving cultural norms, a resurgence of anti-feminism has manifested in online communities (Harrington, 2021). The Manosphere, comprising a collection of ideologies and theories regarding sex and gender roles, has gained prominence on platforms such as Reddit and 4chan. Within this digital sphere, individuals identifying as "men's rights activists" (MRAs) reject the notion of toxic masculinity, positioning themselves as victims within a society perceived as increasingly hostile to men. The term "manosphere" was initially coined on a Blogspot blog in 2009 and gained wider recognition through Ian Ironwood's book (Ironwood, 2013). The manosphere engages in extensive theorization and categorization of masculinity in an attempt to alleviate the dissatisfaction experienced by its adherents in their personal lives. This hyper-theorization often misinterprets evolutionary psychology, positing a genetically predetermined worldview with limited prospects for improvement. Within this framework, individuals are deemed either alpha or beta males at birth, a classification purported to dictate various aspects of their social, personal, and economic lives (Ging, 2019). The concept of "toxic masculinity" was initially introduced by Professor Shepherd Bliss, who employed it to characterise the harsh and authoritarian masculinity exhibited by his father. In the late 1990s, the term was further elaborated to describe father-son relationships lacking in emotional connection, which could potentially lead to the development of "toxically masculine" traits in the son (Harrington, 2021). In this context, positive fathering practices serve as a countermeasure against toxic masculinity, emphasising the importance of fostering open emotional communication devoid of gender-based biases for the socio-emotional development of children (Dumont, 2013). The perpetuation of conservative gender role ideologies and traditional family structures is intricately linked to the emergence of toxic masculinity (Daddow, 2021). The remedy lies in recognizing the reductive and detrimental nature of these ideologies for the mental and physical well-being of both men and women (Dumont, 2013). While contemporary society largely rejects such antiquated notions, the allure of the manosphere's rhetoric persists, fueled by its defiance of patriarchal hegemony. This underscores the need to critically examine and challenge these ideologies within the realm of psychology.

### 1.2 Incels and the Manosphere: Origins and Characteristics

As previously discussed, the term "Incel" refers to individuals who experience involuntary celibacy, indicating a lack of sexual interactions not by choice but due to perceived impossibility. This condition often engenders feelings of dissatisfaction, anger, or sadness,



particularly among young men aged 18-25 who have not engaged in sexual relationships (Tolentino, 2018). Emerging adulthood, characterised by the exploration of self-identity, including romantic pursuits, is a pivotal developmental stage wherein sporadic romantic relationships are commonplace. However, this period of questioning can provoke heightened frustration and anxiety, particularly among individuals already grappling with insecurity (O'Malley, 2022). While experiencing frustration due to the absence of intimate relationships is understandable, the externalisation of these negative emotions through acts of violence is not. The Incel community, as anticipated, harbours highly misogynistic and anti-female sentiments, often inciting participants to engage in violent behaviour towards women. For instance, in 2018, Elliot Rodger authored a manifesto advocating for incels to seek revenge on women and "masculine" men, subsequently perpetrating a mass shooting in Santa Barbara, California, resulting in seven fatalities (BBC, 2018). Rodger's actions have since been lionised within the Incel community, with individuals worldwide idolising his violent actions and portraying him as a hero. Similarly, in the more recent Toronto van attack, Alek Minassian killed 11 individuals and injured 15, further illustrating the extreme nature of the Incel phenomenon (Baele, 2021). In summary, Incels represent the most extreme facet of the complex social phenomenon known as the Manosphere. Within Incel communities, various ideologies converge, contributing to the development and perpetuation of extreme beliefs. A forthcoming exploration of O'Malley's (2022) research will delve deeper into the ideological content of these communities, shedding further light on this intricate psychological landscape.

### 1.3 Understanding the Incel Language

The formulation of specialised terminology plays a pivotal role in the establishment and cohesion of online communities (Arazzi et al., 2023). Understanding this lexicon is crucial for immersing oneself within these communities, particularly within the Incel, where an extensive array of terms has been devised to articulate opinions and foster a sense of belonging. Research conducted by Kelly Gothard and colleagues (2021) delved into the lexicon of the Incel community, shedding light on the foundation of this movement. Their analysis revealed the prevalence of specific terms within Incel forums on platforms such as Reddit, where users congregate to discuss various aspects of the community. Gothard's (2021) study highlighted the frequent occurrence of terms such as "women," "men," "incel," "chad," "cope," "cuck," "normies," "virgin," and "blackpill" in Incel discourse. These terms serve to categorise and differentiate individuals within the community, reflecting a pervasive

negative attitude towards certain groups, particularly women. Additionally, Gothard (2021) noted the invocation of the Pareto principle or the "80/20 rule" by Incels to rationalise their belief that a majority of women pursue relationships with a minority of men, leaving the remainder of men marginalised in the dating sphere. These ideas, often derived from statistical principles or misinterpretations of evolutionary psychology, permeate Incel discussions and serve as coping mechanisms for individuals grappling with feelings of desolation and dissatisfaction, often externalising blame onto society or women for their personal experiences. Furthermore, Gothard (2021) introduced the role of memes as a form of communication within the Incel community. Memes, originally developed as online jokes, have evolved into a global means of communication (Grundlingh, 2018). Within the Incel community, memes serve to reinforce shared beliefs and create a sense of camaraderie among members, contributing to the construction of a distinct Incel identity. In summary, the analysis of Incel lexicon and communication strategies offers valuable insights into the underlying beliefs and dynamics within this community. It underscores the pervasive negativity towards women, the utilisation of coping mechanisms rooted in statistical principles or evolutionary psychology, and the role of memes in fostering community cohesion and identity formation within the Incel community (Gothard, 2021).

#### 1.4 An insight into Incel ideology

O'Malley (2022) examines the impact of social media on the perpetuation of Incel ideologies and gender-based violence, elucidating how the formation of online subcultures parallels the concept of deviancy. Within these subcultures, participants collectively construct a set of shared values divergent from mainstream norms as a means of coping with dissatisfaction. Employing a qualitative research design, O'Malley (2022) seeks to elucidate the predominant ideologies propagated within Incel communities, aiming to shed light on the core ideas perpetuated by its members.

##### 1.4.1 Data and Methods

In examining the dynamics of the Incel online subculture, a total of 8,324 posts authored by 703 users across two active forums were subjected to analysis. To ensure the integrity of the study, "trolls" – individuals feigning Incel membership to mock the community – were excluded, and only narratives consistent with the Incel ideology were considered. The methodological framework employed to measure the features of this subculture involved the concept of "normative orders," which encapsulates the rules governing a central ideology,

integrating both formal (structural and bureaucratic aspects) and informal (values, ideas, identities) elements for a comprehensive analysis (Herbert, 1998). This approach acknowledges the cognitive underpinnings of behaviour, emphasising the role of thoughts and beliefs in shaping actions, and underscores how rules and norms derive meaning from the values they uphold (Herbert, 1998). Widely applicable to both online and offline communities, this methodological framework facilitated the investigation of normative orders within the Incel online subculture. An inductive qualitative methodology, grounded in grounded theory principles (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), was employed to explore the normative orders prevalent in the Incel community. This iterative process involved multiple waves of analysis. Initially, significant common ideas were identified through open coding, wherein recurring themes articulated by two or more users were linked to quotations expressing these concepts. Subsequently, a second wave of axial coding was undertaken to organise and condense the identified codes into more concise categories. For instance, codes related to notions of "attractiveness," "short guy," and "resources" were grouped under the overarching category of "attractiveness," reflecting a shared conceptual idea. Finally, a third and final iteration involved revisiting, analysing, and reorganising the identified concepts to generate a comprehensive schema of the interrelated normative orders within the Incel community. Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the study by anonymizing user identities through the use of pseudonyms, thereby safeguarding participant confidentiality and privacy.

#### 1.4.2 Findings

The analysis identified five interrelated normative orders within the Incel community. The first four pertain to views on the sexual market, the perception of women as inherently evil, strategies to legitimise masculinity, and perceptions of male oppression. However, the fifth normative order is particularly concerning: the validation and justification of violence, primarily targeted at women. Understanding the mechanisms through which these norms operate and perpetuate within the community is crucial for developing effective interventions. The sensation of existing within an unjust, oppressive, and hypersexualized reality, often characterised as "taking the red pill," fosters an environment where violence against women and society is not only accepted but also deemed justifiable by individuals harbouring these beliefs. This mindset, which rationalises violence as a response to perceived injustices, poses significant challenges for intervention efforts aimed at addressing the root causes of violent behaviour within the Incel community.

#### 1.4.2.1 The Sexual Market

The incel community centres its discussions on the perception of a female-dominated sexual marketplace governed by natural selection, where women are viewed as gatekeepers who hold significant power in deciding their sexual partners. Incels believe that this dominance of women in the sexual market poses the primary obstacle to their sexual fulfilment. They emphasise the competitive nature of the sexual market and assert that an individual's place within this hierarchy is determined by their perceived sexual market value (SMV), which includes physical attractiveness and financial status. Incels attribute their inability to engage in sexual activity to their own physical appearance and express frustration with societal beauty standards and high female standards for physical appearance, money, and wealth. This self-disclosure of unattractiveness reinforces an incel's connection to the community, uniting them through shared beliefs in a shallow sexual market and mutual contempt for attractive individuals. Incels also discuss the significance of resources in the sexual market, linking employment success to attractiveness and social skills. The normative structure of the sexual market delineates social boundaries, defining the primary identity of incels as individuals unable to engage in sexual relationships due to a social structure that favours specific traits and successful men. Additionally, incels portray themselves as a marginalised and oppressed group in a society where they perceive themselves to have little to no worth.

#### 1.4.2.2 Women as Naturally Evil

The incel belief system revolves around the notion that women are inherently evil, with users expressing feelings of being bullied and humiliated by women, rooted in evolutionary, biological, and cultural factors. Incels argue that women manipulate men through lies, driven by evolutionary instincts to secure resources for survival. They perceive women as "less evolved" and construct narratives portraying them as manipulative, dishonest, narcissistic, and villainous. Incels resent women for wielding power and control in relationships, justifying their belief using perspectives such as evolutionary psychology and natural selection. They employ biologically deterministic language to reinforce the idea of inherent disparities between men and women, supporting a societal structure where males should have greater power. Incels view feminists as antagonists/opponents, fuelled by frustration over perceived female inferiority and their alleged illegitimate influence in contemporary society. These convictions stoke the anger and animosity of incel members while rationalising their belief that they are the genuinely oppressed faction.

#### 1.4.2.3 Legitimising Masculinity

The incel community promotes the legitimization of masculinity norms through arguments that men are biologically predetermined to sexualize women and indulge in discussions about age and attractiveness, often using evolutionary and biological ideas to assert that older women are inferior to younger women. They normalize pedophilia by claiming natural attraction to minors and exhibit a preference for younger females while expressing aversion towards older women due to perceived reduced fertility. These beliefs lead many incels to argue that the age of consent is an unjust societal construct, reinforcing their sense of oppression by women. Additionally, incels long for a patriarchal era, viewing it as more aligned with the "natural" biological distinctions between men and women, while affirming masculinity by denigrating females through derogatory terms and highlighting perceived female inferiority, particularly emphasising intellectual shortcomings. These actions serve to justify the perceived entitlement of men to oppress women, rejecting the notion of gender equality.

#### 1.4.2.4 Male Oppression

This normative order conceptualises all the posts talking about the idea of men being oppressed by either more masculine men (Chads) or the “modern women”. In the social media world this idea is consistent even outside the incel community. Plenty are the influencers like the already mentioned Andrew Tate promoting this red-pill ideology to young folks (Leeming, 2023). Incels commonly consume concepts related to divorce, focusing on its effects on the economic and psychological status of men while overlooking women's situations in the marriage. They also deliberate on the challenges posed by dating double standards and the socialisation of males, framing male oppression in the context of gendered socialisation and their perceived estrangement from traditional notions of "maleness." Incels express a sense of exclusion from the dating sphere due to societal expectations related to traditional masculinity, which they feel disconnected from, and emphasise physical attractiveness, leading to discussions about pursuing plastic surgery. They discuss disparities in gender socialisation and lament the constraints they experienced growing up as males, feeling unable to freely express themselves. Instead of critiquing toxic masculine socialisation, incels blame feminists and social justice advocates for dismissing male hardship and maintaining control over the sexual marketplace. Discussions are focused on male oppression, societal double standards favouring female privilege and power, and alleged misrepresentation of incels by advocates of social justice.

#### 1.4.2.5 Legitimizing Violence and Revenge

The subcultural interpretations of female behaviour, the dynamics of the sexual marketplace, and the concept of male oppression contributed to a pervasive sense of hostility towards society and a specific animosity towards women within incel forums.. All four normative orders collectively shaped a fifth norm within incel forums: violence towards women is justified. Forum users actively discussed violence, often alluding to "going ER," a reference to Elliot Rodger. Although there was mixed approval of Elliot Rodger and mass violence, some user comments glorified his behaviour. Users shared stories of men murdering women and "normies" in a folder called "lifefuel," which aimed to give incels a sense of joy and hope. Not every user justified the use of violence, some discussed the approval of indirect, passive forms of violence as an alternative to physical violence such as lack of intervention to women in danger. Viewed collectively, this norm amalgamates elements of the various subcultural norms upheld by incels, underpinning the notion that women are uniquely deserving of any violence perpetrated against them. Consequently, both the informal and formal validation of violence within the incel subculture is shaped by fundamental values and convictions concerning the inequities within the sexual marketplace, the inherent malevolence of women, the legitimacy of masculine identity, and the oppression of men.

#### 1.4.3 Discussion and Conclusion

The advent of social media and online platforms has facilitated the emergence of various subcultures, among them extremist groups such as incels, who articulate feelings of marginalisation and resentment, occasionally resorting to targeted violence (Young, 2019). O'Malley (2022) conducted a study investigating their subcultural norms through a content analysis of online forums posts. The study unveiled five central normative orders within the incel subculture: the sexual market, portraying women as inherently malevolent, validating masculinity, male oppression, and the endorsement of violence. These values align closely with the broader ethos of the "manosphere," characterised by its anti-female perspective (Ging, 2019). Within online forums, incels seek social support and validation, reinforcing anti-women beliefs and affirming their perceived oppression and marginalisation. This perpetuation of hostility towards women, alongside the advocacy and justification of violence, even targeting men perceived as superior, is widespread within these communities. The acceptance of notions regarding the inherent malevolence of women, coupled with a perceived sense of oppression by women, can serve to legitimise violence and perpetuate

toxic patriarchal ideologies. The sense of isolation and alienation from society can drive young men to participate in these forums and adopt pseudo-scientific beliefs. While not all incels act upon violent fantasies, it is crucial to explore the pathological and cognitive factors that may predispose individuals to violent behaviour (Fox, 2016; Williams, 2021). The incel subculture represents a distortion of the normal process of encountering rejection in pursuit of romantic relationships. The online forums discussed in this analysis provide participants with a subculture rooted in a skewed perception of typical human experiences, which in turn enables them to rationalise violence against an entire gender. It remains uncertain to what extent the perspectives of forum participants are shaped by real negative interactions with both women and men. Additionally, this research suggests potential strategies to address this phenomenon. Mere website bans are insufficient; as alternative platforms will likely emerge. Instead, targeted messaging should challenge prevailing narratives concerning gender, sexuality, and power. Prevention strategies that emphasise strengths and incorporate education on toxic masculinities and gender equality could prove beneficial, promoting healthier expressions of anger and negative emotions stemming from low self-esteem or self-worth. Engaging in dialogues about incels' beliefs, while also dismantling the portrayal of women as adversaries or the source of their problems, could be pivotal in preventing or mitigating radicalization. Furthermore, education on critical media consumption is imperative. This study is subject to two primary limitations: the small sample size of threads and the disproportionate influence of a few prominent forum users who were posting much more than others. Consequently, generalising these findings to include additional threads and forums in data analysis poses challenges. Nevertheless, the study underscores the urgency of interventions, including prevention and outreach efforts targeting young males susceptible to incel ideologies and those openly identifying as incels online.

## **Chapter 2: Swallowing the black-pill**

In the preceding chapter, we gained a comprehensive understanding of the Incel community, encompassing its history, manifestations, and the distinctive language it has cultivated. Moreover, drawing on insights from the O'Malley (2022) study, we explored examples of ideologies prevalent within these extremist communities. The overarching aim of the first chapter was to provide a preliminary, yet inclusive conceptualization of the Incel community. This second chapter will extend our examination into the Incel belief system, delving deeper into the social, clinical, and cognitive characteristics of individuals who affiliate with this community. Central to this investigation is a nuanced exploration of the factors that drive individuals to act upon their violent fantasies. By elucidating the underlying motivators and psychological processes at play, we aim to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent within the Incel subculture.

### **2.1 Understanding the Incel Identity**

Stijelja and colleagues (2023) conducted a narrative review encompassing findings from 59 empirical studies to elucidate the demographic characteristics and psychological dimensions of individuals within incel communities. These studies explored various aspects, including ethnicity, religious beliefs, and psychological issues such as body image, social anxiety, and depression. Notably, research indicates that individuals experiencing a lack of synchronicity in their sexual experiences may endure adverse effects on their mental well-being (Gesselman et al., 2017). Zimmer-Gembeck & Helfand (2008) further underscored how delayed sexual experiences are associated with heightened anxiety and negative body perceptions. Additionally, studies suggest that socially withdrawn children are more susceptible to lacking sexual experiences in adulthood due to a deficit in social skills and awareness developed during childhood (Lucas, 2019).

Within the incel community, demographic analyses revealed a predominance of young males under the age of 30, with a notable absence of strong correlations between incel identity and specific ethnic backgrounds (Stijelja, 2023). A survey conducted within the incels.co community (SergeantIncel, 2019) shed light on distressing statistics, with a substantial portion of users reporting never having had any sexual encounters or relationships. Moreover, a high prevalence of depression, stress, anxiety, and suicidal ideation was observed among community members. This pattern was corroborated by subsequent surveys (Speckhard, 2021), indicating a consistent pattern of psychological distress within the incel demographic.



Moskalenko (2022) expanded upon these findings, identifying correlations between experiences of bullying in school and the endorsement of violent thoughts among incels, as well as a strong association between autism spectrum disorder diagnosis and radicalism. Importantly, qualitative analyses conducted by Stijelja and colleagues (2023) highlighted the pervasive dissemination of hate speech against women within incel communities, akin to findings from O'Malley (2022). In essence, the average incel tends to be a young man who has encountered adverse or unsatisfactory experiences during childhood, particularly in the realm of social interactions. These individuals may perceive themselves as having missed essential developmental milestones, fostering feelings of anger and resentment towards society, particularly women. Within incel communities, these individuals find solace in shared grievances and reinforce their hateful ideologies. Despite identifying patriarchal standards as oppressive, they internalise and perpetuate these standards, exacerbating their feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. A crucial finding from Speckhard & Ellenberg (2021) underscores the discrepancy between the high prevalence of psychological issues among incels and their relatively low engagement with therapy, highlighting the need for targeted messaging to sensitise individuals to the benefits of therapy. Within these communities, individuals endorse actions of violence justification and glorification, or resignation to their circumstances, perpetuating their victim narrative (Baele, 2021). These narratives are reinforced through networked interactions within echo chambers, further solidifying their ideologies (Salojärvi, 2020).

## 2.2 Mental Health and Well-being of Incels

In this section, the focus shifts to an analysis of research concerning the mental health of incels. Costello (2022) seeks to address this topic by accessing primary data directly from self-identified incels. As observed, individuals within the incel community often contend with various mental health challenges. The primary hypothesis under investigation posits that incels, in comparison to non-incels, are likely to exhibit lower levels of well-being coupled with heightened rates of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. To elucidate these dynamics, it is imperative to introduce the construct of Tendency for Interpersonal Victimhood (TIV; Gabay et al., 2020), which comprises four dimensions: the need for recognition, moral elitism, lack of empathy, and rumination—all of which align with the observed characteristics of incels. Accordingly, we anticipate that members of the incel group will demonstrate elevated levels of TIV relative to the non-incel group (2nd hypothesis). Moreover, this study aims to explore how TIV modulates levels of well-being. It is theorised that the impact of TIV on well-being

will be significantly more pronounced within the incel group compared to the non-incel group (3rd hypothesis). In addition to TIV, sociosexual desire (SOI) is another measure under examination. Previous research (Passman, 2020) has indicated that incels tend to score higher on the sociosexual scale but lower on sociosexual behaviour, leading to a notable disparity that may exacerbate feelings of dissatisfaction. Thus, we posit that the incel group will exhibit elevated levels of sociosexual desire in comparison to the non-incel group (4th hypothesis), with this disparity having a more pronounced impact on the well-being of incels relative to non-incels (5th hypothesis). Through an exploration of these hypotheses, this study seeks to offer valuable insights into the psychological dimensions of the incel phenomenon, shedding light on the interplay between interpersonal victimhood, sociosexual desire, and overall well-being within this unique community.

### 2.2.1 Method

The participants for this study were recruited through social media platforms, and a total of 783 individuals responded to the survey. Only male participants who responded to the item regarding incel identification were included, resulting in a final sample of 529 males (Mean age = 31.75, SD = 9.63). Among these, 151 participants self-identified as incels, and they were found to be significantly younger compared to non-incels. The majority of participants were white heterosexual cisgender males. To assess depression levels, the researchers employed the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), a 9-item questionnaire commonly used for diagnosing depression (Kroenke et al., 2001). Levels of anxiety were measured using the Generalised Anxiety Disorder Assessment (GAD-7), a 7-item questionnaire developed to assess anxiety levels (Spitzer et al., 2006). Loneliness levels were identified using the loneliness scale developed by Hughes et al. (2004). Cognitive beliefs regarding life satisfaction were measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), a Likert scale questionnaire designed for this purpose (Diener et al., 1985). The Tendency for Interpersonal Victimhood (TIV) scale, consisting of four dimensions, was utilised to measure victimhood tendencies among participants (Gabay et al., 2020). Sociosexual desire was assessed using the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory Revised (SOI-R), with a focus on the SOI-D dimension (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). Participants' identification as incels was determined using a single-item question: "Do you identify as an incel?" Demographic information was also collected. Given that participants were allowed to abstain from responding to certain items, missing data were addressed using listwise deletion, although this resulted in a

reduction of the sample size. To maintain statistical power, mean scores were computed to mitigate the impact of missing data on the analyses conducted.

### 2.2.2 Results

Dimension	Incel men	Non-incel men	t	df	P <sub>adj</sub>	95%BootCI	d	β - 1
	M (SD)	M (SD)						
<b>Well-being measures</b>								
Depression	1.94 (0.71, n = 112)	1.35 (0.80, n = 259)	6.73	369	< 0.001	[0.42, 0.75]	0.78	0.99
Anxiety	1.61 (0.88, n = 108)	1.09 (0.79, n = 242)	5.25	186.97	< 0.001	[0.33, 0.71]	0.62	0.99
Loneliness	2.66 (0.43, n = 111)	2.14 (0.62, n = 240)	9.08	294.73	< 0.001	[0.41, 0.63]	0.97	0.99
Satisfaction with life	2.66 (1.33, n = 104)	3.97 (1.49, n = 266)	- 7.78	368	< 0.001	[- 1.61, - 0.99]	0.92	0.99
<b>TIV</b>								
Need for recognition	3.36 (1.02, n = 129)	3.02 (0.91, n = 311)	3.45	438	< 0.003	[0.14, 0.54]	0.35	0.92
Moral elitism	3.50 (0.85, n = 128)	3.05 (0.70, n = 308)	5.18	202.25	< 0.001	[0.27, 0.61]	0.56	0.99
Lack of empathy	2.78 (1.03, n = 121)	2.45 (0.78, n = 289)	3.08	180.45	< 0.01	[0.12, 0.52]	0.35	0.90
Rumination	3.33 (1.24, n = 115)	2.61 (1.14, n = 264)	5.50	377	< 0.001	[0.46, 0.99]	0.60	0.99
Overall TIV	3.28 (0.76, n = 130)	2.84 (0.59, n = 317)	5.87	195.95	< 0.001	[0.29, 0.59]	0.64	0.99
Sociosexual desire	5.38 (2.18, n = 134)	4.82 (1.94, n = 320)	2.59	226.31	< 0.01	[0.15, 0.99]	0.27	0.75

**Figure 1** from the article of Costello et al. (2022), pp. 6.

The table depicted in Figure 1 displays the results of independent samples t-tests comparing incels and non-incels across various outcome variables. Confirming Hypotheses 1, 2, and 4, incels scored significantly higher than non-incels in depression, anxiety, loneliness, sociosexual desire, and all four measures of Tendency for Interpersonal Victimhood (TIV), while scoring lower in life satisfaction. To investigate the moderating effects of TIV and sociosexual desire on well-being (Hypotheses 3 and 5), correlations were computed between TIV and well-being, as well as sociosexual desire and well-being. Fisher's Z was then calculated to examine potential differences in these correlations between incels and non-incels.

Correlated variables		r <sub>incel</sub>	r <sub>non-incel</sub>	Z-value
TIV	Depression	0.39***	0.43***	- 0.35
	Anxiety	0.45***	0.45***	- 0.06
	Loneliness	0.35***	0.39***	- 0.42
	Satisfaction with life	- 0.15	- 0.24***	0.80
SOI desire	Depression	0.29**	0.09	1.76****
	Anxiety	0.32***	0.15*	1.50
	Loneliness	0.26**	0.06	1.72****
	Satisfaction with life	- 0.04	0.01	- 0.41

\*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*\*\*p < 0.10

**Figure 2** from the article of Costello et al. (2022), pp. 7.

Tendency for Interpersonal Victimhood (TIV) displayed positive correlations with depression, anxiety, and loneliness in both incels and non-incels (see Figure 2). However, there were no significant differences observed in these correlations between the two groups.

Within the incel group, positive correlations were found between Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI) desire and depression, anxiety, and loneliness, with no significant correlation identified with satisfaction with life. Conversely, among non-incels, the only significant correlation emerged between SOI desire and anxiety. Fisher's Z for the relationships between SOI desire and depression, as well as SOI desire and loneliness, revealed marginal significance, suggesting a trend toward stronger associations within the incel subgroup. The study utilised moderated regression analyses to investigate whether the association between incel identification and negative well-being measures was contingent on TIV and sociosexual desire. Multivariate outliers were excluded from the analysis. Mental health outcomes were regressed on incel identification, TIV, sociosexual desire, and interaction terms. While TIV significantly moderated the relationship with loneliness, the observed effect was contrary to predictions. Greater TIV scores were linked to increased loneliness for incels, but this effect was more pronounced among non-incel men. Notably, sociosexual desire did not moderate any relationship between incel self-identification and mental health outcomes.

### 2.2.3 Discussion and conclusion

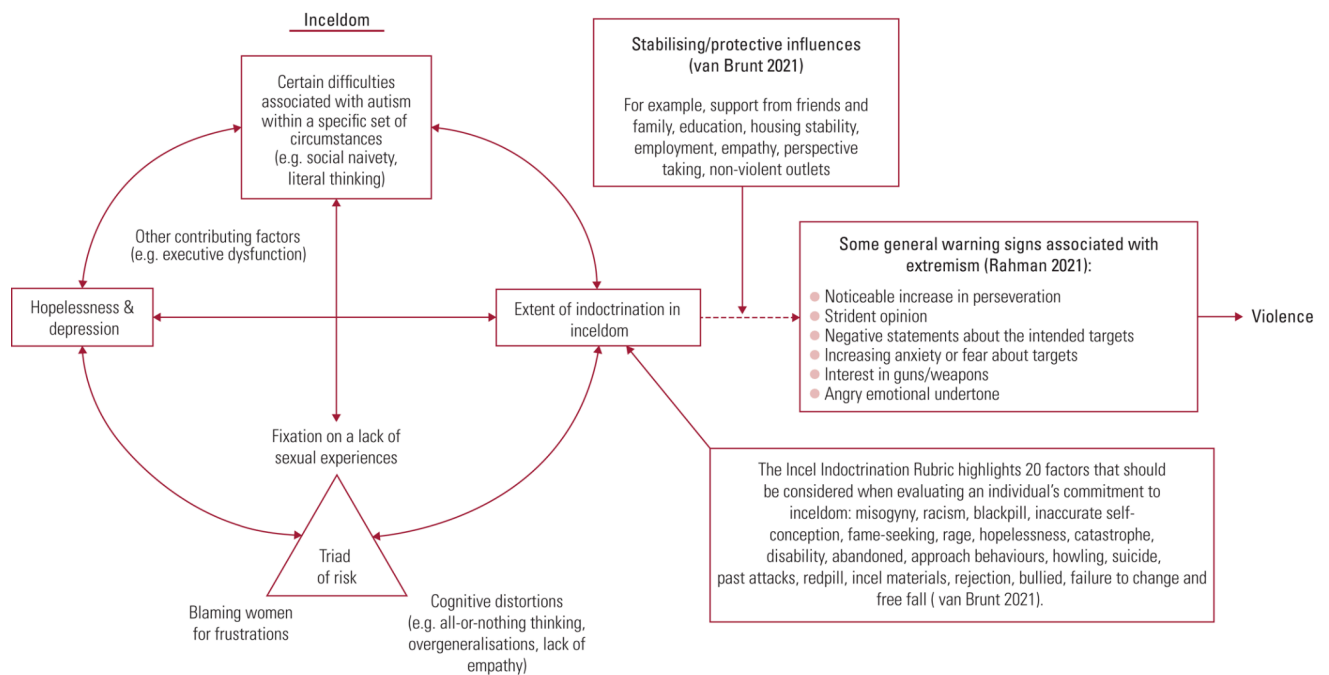
The study findings underscore the significant mental health disparities between incels and non-incels, with incels exhibiting higher levels of depression, anxiety, loneliness, and lower life satisfaction. Tendency for Interpersonal Victimhood (TIV), sociosexual desire, and beliefs surrounding the permanency of incelhood emerged as influential factors impacting mental well-being. Incels are disproportionately affected by diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health conditions, are more likely to be NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), have lower educational attainment, and often reside with their parents, factors which impede their ability to form romantic relationships. This surplus population of unpartnered young men within the incel community may pose negative societal repercussions, underscoring the urgency for tailored mental health interventions. Addressing incels' profound sense of loneliness, which is considered a critical indicator, is paramount and aligns with evolutionary psychology's understanding of loneliness as a threat rooted in ancestral associations. Mental health interventions should consider the impact of TIV on both incels and non-incels, recognizing the importance of establishing a strong therapeutic alliance. Rumination, associated with heightened depression levels among incels, prompts discussions on its potential adaptive properties and opens avenues for therapeutic intervention. Encouraging the cultivation of an internal locus of control may help challenge fatalistic thinking patterns

prevalent among incels. The study delves into the impact of involuntary celibate status on well-being, noting that sociosexual desire does not moderate mental health outcomes. It suggests that incels' perceived inability to achieve mating goals, irrespective of desire levels, contributes to their poor mental health. While some incels may find positive aspects in their social identity, challenges arise from forum usage and beliefs regarding the permanency of incelhood. In addressing mental health challenges among incels, the study underscores the importance of mental health professionals equipped with knowledge of evolutionary psychology. It also highlights the reluctance of incels to seek help and underscores the relevance of evolutionary psychology in understanding the socioeconomic factors contributing to their relational challenges. The study underscores the necessity for interventions that address the frustration and exclusion experienced by incels, while also promoting the development of "mating intelligence" and considering socioeconomic factors crucial to their well-being. It challenges assumptions linking the incel subculture to far-right movements, highlighting the ethnic and political diversity among incels, and suggesting that addressing material conditions through education and employment opportunities could ameliorate their mental well-being. A limitation is acknowledged regarding reliance on incel self-identification, urging future research to develop a validated incelhood scale for more precise assessments and targeted interventions.

### 2.3 Incels and violence

Understanding the phenomenon of incel violence requires an examination of individual characteristics that may predispose certain individuals to engage in violent actions within extremist groups. While incels typically grapple with mental health challenges, distinguishing factors between an incel and an incel who resorts to violence warrant investigation (Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2021; Mosalenko, 2022; Lucas, 2019). Initially, incel forums served as online platforms offering emotional support to individuals experiencing distress due to their lack of sexual activity. However, such support mechanisms can transform into hubs where individuals freely propagate their hateful ideologies, whether directed towards themselves or others, a phenomenon observed not only in incel communities but also in forums addressing issues like eating disorders (Juarascio, 2010). What begins as a means of providing support and perhaps strategies for improving the situation of incels can evolve into a coping mechanism for loneliness, fueled by the adoption of the blackpill ideology. This ideology externalises individual problems by attributing them to societal injustices, thereby fostering a mindset that perceives violence as a legitimate means of effecting change

(Pauwels, 2020). To address the issue of incel violence effectively, interventions must focus on understanding its underlying drivers and developing preventive strategies.



**Figure 3** from the article of Broyd (2023), pp 7

To comprehend the dynamics of incel violence, van Brunt and Taylor's Incel Indoctrination Rubric (IIR) offers a valuable framework (van Brunt, 2021). Developed through the analysis of 50 case studies of incel-related violence, the IIR identifies 20 factors indicative of an individual's commitment to the incel ideology. Central to this rubric is the triad of risk, serving as the nucleus for incel radicalization. This triad encompasses fixation on sexual inexperience, attributing frustration to women, and cognitive distortions (e.g., overgeneralization, lack of empathy, all-or-nothing thinking). The presence of this cognitive triad can evoke feelings of hopelessness and desperation, exacerbating one's susceptibility to incel beliefs. Notably, a significant proportion of individuals in incel forums are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, suggesting that social difficulties associated with this condition may contribute to their lack of sexual experiences. Moreover, difficulties in emotion regulation among individuals with autism spectrum disorder are also considered within the IIR, underscoring its relevance in understanding incel radicalization.

The degree of indoctrination into inceldom is gauged by the extent to which individuals align with the 20 identified factors and ideologies always present in incel discussions. Elevated scores across these variables heighten the risk of engagement in violent actions, particularly when individuals exhibit warning signs of extremism, such as increased perseverance,

strident opinions, negative statements about intended targets, heightened fear/anxiety towards targets, an interest in firearms, and anger-driven emotional undertones (Rahman, 2021). Importantly, the presence of establishing/protective influences, such as support from friends and family, educational opportunities, and empathy, can mitigate the likelihood of incel violence, underscoring the potential for intervention (Ganesh, 2020). The IIR offers a promising avenue for assessing and understanding the risk of incel violence and radicalization. Future research should empirically validate the efficacy of this rubric in predicting incel-related violence and informing preventive interventions (Broyd, 2023).

### **Chapter 3: Hate propagation in Social Media and Possible Interventions**

Following our exploration of the Incel movement and the individual characteristics associated with its adherents, it is imperative to examine the broader societal context in which this phenomenon unfolds—the realm of social media and the internet. Originating as a fully online movement, the Incel community owes its existence to the digital landscape. Ironically, the term "Incel" was initially coined by a queer woman who established a website aimed at providing support for individuals encountering challenges in securing romantic partners (Young, 2019). Little did she anticipate that two decades later, the concept would evolve into its current form. This underscores the transformative power of the internet in shaping and fostering virtual communities, such as the Incel movement, which transcend geographical boundaries and conventional social structures. Through digital platforms, individuals can connect, exchange ideas, and form communities based on shared experiences and beliefs, highlighting the complex interplay between technology, human psychology, and societal dynamics. Thus, an examination of the role of social media and the internet in perpetuating and shaping the Incel movement is essential for a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

#### **3.1: The side-effects of social media**

Social media platforms have revolutionised global connectivity, offering a conduit for positive interactions among millions worldwide (Young, 2019). However, alongside these benefits, there exists a concerning trend wherein extremist groups exploit these platforms to propagate their ideologies (Ganesh, 2018; Hawdon, 2014). This phenomenon aligns with group polarisation theory (Iandoli, 2021; Sunstein, 1999), positing that individuals within like-minded groups may become more radicalised when surrounded by similar viewpoints (Hawdon, 2014). The internet's anonymity and lack of consequences for sharing hateful or violent content further exacerbate this issue (Patton, 2013; Takov, 2021). Anonymity, in particular, facilitates detachment from societal norms, leading to increased engagement in aggressive or discriminatory discourse (Patton, 2013). Additionally, the echo-chamber effect (Cinelli, 2021) perpetuated by social media algorithms amplifies extremist views by reinforcing users' preexisting beliefs and limiting exposure to diverse perspectives (Salojärvi, 2020; Gaudette, 2022). Research by Johnson (2018) underscores a concerning correlation between online hate speech and offline violence, necessitating legislative measures to regulate digital discourse and mitigate real-world repercussions. However, implementing such regulations poses challenges in the decentralised landscape of the internet. Discussions



on the boundaries of free speech and governmental interventions regarding online hate speech are imperative (Ganesh, 2018). Addressing these issues requires interdisciplinary collaboration among policymakers, psychologists, and technologists to develop effective strategies that balance freedom of expression with the prevention of harm.

### 3.2: A qualitative study to understand the links between social media use and Incel attacks

Young (2019) conducted a study to explore the influence of social media on incel violence. Employing a content analysis approach, he examined the relationship between incel rhetoric on various social media platforms and instances of real-life incel violence. Young focused on incel forums and subreddits, including incels.me, r/truecels, /incels.co/, redpilltalk.com, and lookism.net, to investigate the potential connections between online discussions within the incel community and subsequent acts of violence perpetrated by individuals identifying with this subculture.

#### 3.2.1: Methodology

In examining the phenomenon of incel violence, the researcher analysed the content posted by perpetrators prior to their attacks, aiming to elucidate the relationship between social media engagement and mass killings. This investigation involved scrutinising news articles discussing the incidents and gathering comprehensive information about the perpetrators, including their ideologies and preferred social media platforms. By meticulously tracing the connections between the attacks and preceding online activity, the researcher categorised their findings based on thematic elements, focusing on posts related to violence and discernible trends in online behaviour. Notably, to maintain objectivity and minimise potential biases, the researcher refrained from direct engagement with the incel community, ensuring the integrity of the data analysis process. In the initial phase of the study, Young (2019) conducted a comprehensive examination of the content disseminated within Incel forums, yielding results consistent with those observed by O'Malley (2022). However, the subsequent phase of the investigation delved into the correlation between these online platforms and instances of mass violence. This involved categorising the findings based on the individuals responsible for perpetuating such acts, scrutinising their online activities preceding the attacks, and assessing how they were depicted within incel communities both before and after the incidents. The ensuing discussion will scrutinise each perpetrator in turn, elucidating the interconnected discourse within the Incel forums and its implications.

### 3.2.2 Findings: Elliot Rodger

The Isla Vista killings perpetrated by Elliot Rodger in May 2014 serve as a poignant illustration of the nexus between incel ideology and violence. Through his manifesto and pre-attack video, Rodger conveyed profound animosity towards individuals who rejected him romantically. Characterising women as objects, Rodger articulated a sense of alienation and societal disenfranchisement stemming from his perceived lack of sexual experience. His engagement with online platforms such as PUAhate underscores the significance of these communities in reinforcing and amplifying extremist beliefs. Rodger's case underscores the perils of unmitigated online radicalization within the incel sphere. Even following his demise, incel forums continue to venerate Rodger, with frequent allusions to him evident across these platforms. Furthermore, some users openly advocate for emulating Rodger's actions, promoting violence against others in what is colloquially termed "going ER." This phenomenon underscores the propensity of online forums to normalise and instigate real-world violence, thereby underscoring the alarming influence of such communities in propagating extremist ideologies.

#### 3.2.2.1 Chris Harper-Mercer

In October 2015, Chris Harper-Mercer carried out a mass shooting at Umpqua Community College, killing nine students and injuring nine others before taking his own life. Like Elliot Rodger, Harper-Mercer expressed feelings of loneliness and rejection by society in a manifesto. Prior to the attack, an incel thread on 4chan hinted at impending violence, with users discussing a "beta revolution" and offering tips for mass shootings. The FBI believes Harper-Mercer authored this post. Following the attack, users on the forum celebrated the violence, hailing it as a victory for incels. This incident also highlights the role of online forums in radicalising individuals and inciting violence within the incel community by calling the need of a "beta revolution".

#### 3.2.2.2 Alek Minassian

On April 23, 2018, Alek Minassian declared on Facebook that "the incel rebellion has already begun" before driving a van into pedestrians in Toronto, killing 10 and injuring 14, mostly women. He referenced Elliot Rodger as the "Supreme Gentleman" and mentioned 4chan, suggesting involvement in incel forums and a desire for his attack to be linked to the incel movement. Incels like Harper-Mercer, Minassian, and Nikolas Cruz have cited Elliot Rodger

as inspiration for their violent acts. Cruz, who carried out the Parkland school shooting, idolised Rodger, as evidenced by his online posts. Similarly, William Atchison, responsible for a shooting spree in Aztec, New Mexico, idolised Rodger and other mass shooters. Despite not explicitly identifying as incels, both Cruz and Atchison were influenced by Rodger's violence.

### 3.2.3 Discussion

It is evident how social media has significantly contributed to the rise of incel violence by facilitating the formation of incel communities and the glorification of violence within those communities. These platforms have served as crucial avenues for incels to connect and radicalise, operating as isolated and anonymous spaces where hate crimes are encouraged rather than discouraged. Given that many incels tend to be antisocial and lack real-life social connections (Stijelja, 2023), the internet has become their primary social sphere, fostering an echo chamber where radicalization occurs at an accelerated pace. This online reality, characterised by endless subforums, memes, and specialised language, underscores the urgent need to address the influence of social media in perpetuating incel violence. These findings indicate that the formation and radicalization of the incel group have been significantly facilitated by social media. Given the social taboos surrounding incel ideologies and the tendency for incels to be reclusive, it is improbable that they would have connected and organised to the extent seen online without social media platforms. In the absence of these digital spaces, individuals may still have held incel beliefs, but they would have lacked the means to form cohesive ideological groups and undergo radicalization processes. Therefore, social media plays a crucial role in enabling the formation and radicalization of incel communities. Social media platforms have not only been instrumental in forming the incel community but have also played a significant role in inciting members to commit real-world violence. Elliot Rodger's attack served to legitimise incels as a hate group with violent tendencies, as his violence was glorified in incel forums and contributed to a trend of online idolization of killers. The desire for fame emerges as a key motivator for incel violence, with many perpetrators idolising previous attackers and explicitly linking mass killings to gaining recognition. Perpetrators such as Minassian and Harper-Mercer announced their attacks on incel forums, further legitimising the violence within the community. This underscores the urgent need to address online hate groups with the same seriousness as real-world hatred, as they have proven to be just as lethal.

### 3.3 On Intervention

Regarding interventions, the dissertation proposes a multi-faceted approach. Broyd's (2023) narrative analysis highlights the need for tailored interventions, considering the complexity of incels' irrational ideologies and potential cognitive impairments. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) emerges as a promising treatment modality due to its focus on challenging distorted thinking patterns. Despite incels' scepticism towards therapy, efforts to encourage engagement with mental health services are deemed essential (Speckhard, 2021). Moreover, group therapy, particularly in online settings, is suggested, with caution exercised to mitigate feelings of inferiority (White, 2017). Compassion-focused therapy is also posited as a potential avenue for intervention, pending further empirical validation (Maxwell, 2020). In addressing the radicalization facilitated by the internet, targeted messaging as well as training on online critical thinking emerge as a key strategy, as articulated by O'Malley (2022). Ganesh's (2020) delineation of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) techniques underscores the importance of primary prevention efforts, including informing individuals about extremist ideologies to forestall radicalization. Furthermore, the dissertation emphasises the role of positive parenting and empathetic education in mitigating the development of toxic masculinity (Dumont, 2013). Family support and informal messaging from trusted individuals are identified as pivotal factors in the deradicalization process (Ganesh, 2020). Recognizing the challenges posed by online content regulation, the dissertation advocates for a proactive approach centred on debunking extremist narratives and disseminating accurate information. It underscores the need for nuanced strategies that go beyond mere content removal. Ultimately, the dissertation aims to raise awareness on the incel phenomenon and proposes a comprehensive framework for intervention, underscoring the urgency of addressing this growing threat within contemporary society. It calls for a re-evaluation of the internet's role and advocates for proactive measures to counter extremist ideologies in online spaces (Young, 2019). It is necessary to talk about how social media is shaping our lives and our well-being, it is necessary to design more studies understanding the fundamental faulty factors of these new technologies to improve them.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, this dissertation has provided a multifaceted exploration of the Incel phenomenon, shedding light on its origins, manifestations, individual characteristics, and broader societal implications. Through an analysis of existing literature and research findings (Broyd, 2023; Costello, 2022; Ging, 2019; Gothard, 2021; Harrington 2021; O'Malley, 2022; Stijelja, 2023; Williams, 2021; Young, 2019), several key insights have emerged. Firstly, the Incel community represents a complex online subculture characterised by feelings of marginalisation, dissatisfaction, and anger, particularly among young men who perceive themselves as unable to attain romantic or sexual relationships. This sense of exclusion and frustration often stems from a variety of factors, including social anxiety, depression, body image issues, and social skill deficits. Furthermore, the Incel ideology, perpetuated through online forums and social media platforms, fosters a narrative of victimhood, misogyny, and resentment towards society, particularly women. This narrative is reinforced by pseudo-scientific beliefs, such as the "blackpill" ideology, which attributes individuals' lack of success in relationships to immutable biological factors and societal injustices. Moreover, research has highlighted the significant mental health challenges faced by individuals within the Incel community, including higher rates of depression, anxiety, loneliness, and suicidality. These mental health issues are often exacerbated by the sense of social isolation and perceived injustice experienced by Incels. Additionally, studies have identified risk factors associated with Incel violence, including cognitive distortions, feelings of hopelessness, and social difficulties, particularly among individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. The Incel Indoctrination Rubric (IIR) offers a framework for assessing radicalization within the Incel community, highlighting the interplay between individual characteristics and ideological indoctrination. In addressing the Incel phenomenon, it is crucial to adopt a multifaceted approach that encompasses both individual and societal levels of intervention. Mental health interventions targeting Incels should focus on addressing underlying psychological issues, promoting social skills development, and challenging distorted beliefs about relationships and masculinity. Moreover, efforts to combat Incel violence must address the broader societal factors that contribute to radicalization, including social media echo chambers, toxic masculinity norms, and societal marginalisation. Education, outreach, and community-based initiatives are essential for challenging harmful ideologies and promoting empathy, tolerance, and inclusivity. In conclusion, the Incel phenomenon represents a complex intersection of individual psychology, social dynamics, and online culture. By

addressing the underlying psychological and societal factors driving the Incel movement, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and compassionate society for all individuals

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