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Current Research in Behavioral Sciences

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/crbeha

Editorial

Individual differences in cyberpsychology

The rapid spread of digital technologies in everyday life has changed the nature of interaction, information, and decision-making. From social media to sports analytics to finance, technology is making significant impacts around the world. Yet, people react to and engage with these technologies differently. Personality, cognitive styles, and demographic variables influence patterns of online engagement, as well as the benefits and costs associated with using technology. The relationship between individual differences and technology is an emerging interdisciplinary field, known as cyberpsychology. Three distinct but interconnected contributions in this special issue demonstrate how individual psychological characteristics influence digital behavior in various contexts, including social media, sports, and financial decision-making. The articles emphasize that technology cannot be studied in isolation and that human diversity always shapes its psychological effects.

Problematic TikTok use and body image

O'Connor et al. (2024) explore the problematic use of TikTok on body appreciation, focusing on physical appearance perfectionism and upward social comparisons. Findings highlight vulnerabilities among individuals with strict appearance-related standards, demonstrating that perfectionism mediates the relationship between excessive TikTok use and negative body image. This study goes beyond the widely recognized impacts of Instagram to illustrate the dangers of short-form video content. The study also provides recommendations for feasible tactics, such as conducting screenings for perfectionism and offering resilience-building and body-image-promoting workshops in social media environments.

Pre-game anxiety and athletic performance

Using machine learning algorithms to analyze NBA players' tweets, Gruda and Ojo (2023) take a novel approach to researching the relationship between inferred pre-game anxiety and on-court performance in elite sports. Pre-game anxiety in experienced players with longer on-court playing time was reported to predict improved on-court performance and the opposite for less skilled players. These results demonstrate the importance of experience in helping to reframe pre-game anxiety from debilitating to facilitative of performance. This study presents an

innovative method demonstrating the utility of digital traces in detecting emotions and offers valuable insights into how athletes can change their perception of anxiety over time. By doing so, this study establishes a connection between performance psychology and cyberpsychology, demonstrating how online behavior can serve as a significant indicator of offline outcomes.

Psychological characteristics of cryptocurrency owners

Robba et al. (2024) use a representative sample to investigate the psychological characteristics associated with cryptocurrency ownership. They identify six psychological profiles using latent profile analysis and discover that, while impulsivity is more closely linked to previous ownership, current cryptocurrency owners typically exhibit high levels of financial literacy, self-efficacy, and risk tolerance. The study sheds light on the psychological aspects of this quickly expanding financial trend, showing that personal characteristics have as much of an impact on digital investing behaviors as do market circumstances. The study also emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between knowledge-based confidence and impulsive decisions in digital finance.

Concluding remarks

When viewed through the prism of individual differences, the contributions in this special issue collectively demonstrate the depth of cyberpsychology. Whether it is the psychological profiles that predict engagement with new financial assets, the adaptive role of emotional states in high-pressure situations, or the susceptibility to harmful social comparison, each paper situates technology within the context of human behavioral variability. In keeping with the interdisciplinary nature of the field, the studies also demonstrate methodological diversity by utilizing latent profile modelling, mediation analysis, and natural language processing.

In the end, these articles all point to the same conclusion: comprehending people is essential to comprehending the effects of technology. To ensure that interventions and policies are tailored to the diversity of human users, future research should continue to integrate psychological theory with technological settings. By doing so, cyberpsychology can provide valuable tools and explanations to enhance performance, foster responsible engagement in the digital world, and promote overall well-being.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crbeha.2025.100189>

Available online 23 September 2025

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