A data-driven classification of outcome behaviours in those who cause concern to British public figures

Abstract

Fixated individuals pose a significant threat to public figures. Previous research compares individuals labelled 'approachers' to those labelled 'communicators.' Typically, such studies compare a number of risk factors among the two groups to identify significant differences. This has impactful implications for the threat assessment and management of the pathologically fixated. The present study builds upon this established body of work by considering if more nuance can be disaggregated from a universe of cases referred to the Fixated Threat Assessment Centre (FTAC). FTAC is a joint police and mental health unit in the UK which applies a public health approach to managing the pathologically fixated. The present study takes a deductive approach to detect profiles of cases from the data. First, we use cluster analysis to detect un-measured subgroups of concerning behaviour in the case files of 2,118 referrals to FTAC. We identify five patterns of concerning behaviour: *incoherent offline communicators, incoherent online communicators, angry/abusive communicators, concerning approachers,* and *problematic approachers*. Second, we examine the rate of diagnosed mental disorder, the nature of concerns evoked, and case management actions taken among each of the five profiles identified. We conclude by highlighting how our results could inform triaging large volumes of cases, the allocation of limited resources, and more generally, how the success of the FTAC model has relevance across the management of grievance-fuelled violence in general.

Keywords: FTAC, fixated, threat assessment, approacher, communicator, grievance-fuelled violence

Introduction

Fixated individuals pose a significant risk to public figures. The study of threats and other problematic behaviours toward public figures is wide-ranging. Studies typically measure the levels of harassment, stalking, and/or aggressive behaviours experienced (Adams et al., 2009; Akhtar & Morrison, 2019; Bjørgo & Silkoset, 2018; Every-Palmer et al., 2015; James et al., 2016; Lowry et al., 2015; McLoughlin & Ward, 2017; Narud & Dahl, 2014; Pathé et al., 2014; Thomas et al., 2019), analyse the backgrounds and characteristics of the individuals conducting these behaviours (Fein et al., 1999; James et al., 2007, 2008; Pathé et al., 2015), outline the warning signs of a potential attack (Fein et al., 1999; Hoffman et al., 2011; Meloy & Amman, 2016; Scalora et al., 2003;), provide in-depth case studies (Dietz & Martell, 2010; Karayiannis, 2019; Unsgaard & Meloy, 2011; Van der Meer, 2015;), explore promising approaches to prevent, disrupt and/or mitigate the problem (Guldimann et al., 2018; James & Farnham, 2015; Pathé et al., 2018; Riddle et al., 2019), or linguistically examine the threat's written content (Chung & Pennebaker, 2011; Nick, 2018).

Of these, many compare fixated individuals who make an approach, i.e. 'approachers' to those who send communications, i.e. 'communicators' (Eke et al., 2014; James et al., 2010, 2011; Marquez & Scalora, 2011; Meloy et al., 2011; Scalora et al., 2002; Schoeneman-Morris et al., 2007; Van Der Meer, 2012). Some go further and compare different forms of approach (James et al., 2011; Marquez & Scalora, 2011), or communication (Schoeneman-Morris et al., 2007). Approachers are typically more concerning than communicators, given the inherent risk of violence when approaching people or places associated with the target of fixation. Hence, one of the purposes of comparing these two groups is often to identify significant differences, as a proxy measure for the risk of violence. To this end, factors such as mental disorder (Dietz & Martell, 1989; James, Meloy, et al., 2010; James et al., 2009; Meloy et al., 2004, 2008, 2010; Scalora et al., 2002a, 2002b), motivation (Darnley et al.,

2010; James, Kerrigan, Forfar, Farnham, & Preston, 2010; Marquez & Scalora, 2011; McEwan, MacKenzie, Mullen, & James, 2012; Meloy & Amman, 2016) criminal history or violence (Eke, Meloy, Brooks, Jean, & Hilton, 2014; Mitchell, Palk, & Kavanagh, 2019), and many more, are often compared between approachers and communicators.

Studies of communicators and approachers consistently find that the nature of mental disorders can discriminate between groups. Approachers more often demonstrate evidence of serious mental disorder, often associated with psychosis (Adams et al., 2009; James et al., 2010; Scalora et al., 2002a; 2003; Schoeneman et al., 2011). Regarding criminal involvement, discriminating between approachers and communicators is more difficult. For instance, Scalora et al. (2001, 2002, 2003) found that approachers typically had more prior criminal charges than communicators and that these typically related to drugs/alcohol, theft/burglary, assault and weapons offenses. However, Eke et al. (2014) found approachers had engaged in significantly less offending.

Many studies employ numerous factors as independent variables to differentiate among communicators and approachers. This body of work has been the source of a range of important findings that have impactful practical applications when managing fixated populations. However, both ‘communicator’ and ‘approacher’ are labels applied retroactively to a set of cases. These labels may mask subtler differences in patterns of concerning behaviour among a complex population. Uncovering this nuance could provide practitioners with further guidance to build-upon this established body of work, which may contribute to informing decision-making and case management. To do so, we suggest a deductive, data-driven approach as an alternative to more traditional, inductive research designs.

Analytical rationale

Previous crime-oriented research uses analytical strategies such as cluster analysis, or latent class analysis, to detect latent sub-groups in offending populations. Most often, studies

disaggregate populations upon a number of variables of interest in order to identify un-measured class membership. They conceptualise different classes as types in a typology. For example, this analytical strategy developed pathway typologies of a range of offenders, including non-serial sexual killers (Stefanska, Carter, Higgs, Bishopp, & Beech, 2015), sex offenders who target marginalised victims (Horan & Beauregard, 2017), extrafamilial sexual aggressors against women (Proulx, Beauregard, Lussier, & Leclerc, 2014), intrafamilial child sex offenders (Leclerc, Beauregard, Forouzan, & Proulx, 2014), extrafamilial sexual aggressors against adolescents (Brouillette-Alarie & Proulx, 2014), and marital rapists (Proulx & Beauregard, 2014). Similarly, latent class analyses developed offender profiles of burglars (Fox & Farrington, 2012), sexual burglary (Pedneault, Harris & Knight, 2012), participants in drug treatment court (Larsen, Nylund-Gibson & Cosden, 2014), dating violence (Krishnakumar, Conroy & Narine, 2018), and may more. More recently, Clemmow, Bouhana & Gill, (2019) developed a typology of person-exposure patterns (PEPs) in 125 cases of lone-actor terrorism. Hence there is reason to believe this strategy could offer significant insight into the FTAC cohort.

The present study aims to detect unmeasured subgroups in a universe of cases referred to the Fixated Threat Assessment Centre (FTAC). FTAC is a joint police/mental health unit that has been in operation since 2006. It has a remit to assess and manage the risk to the British Royal Family, members of parliament, and other prominent political figures from particular members of the public. First, we detect latent sub-groups within the cohort of FTAC's referrals using cluster analysis. We identify five patterns of concerning behaviour: *incoherent offline communicators, incoherent online communicator, angry/abusive communicators, concerning approachers,* and *problematic approachers*. Second, we further examine the characteristics of these profiles be detailing the prevalence of diagnosed mental disorder, and the nature of concerns their behaviour evoked. We conclude by detailing the

actions taken by FTAC staff to manage these individuals to provide a unique insight for policy and practice.

Method

Data

Data were recorded electronically onto a case management system by FTAC staff members including police, mental health nurses, and forensic psychologists and psychiatrists. Researchers extracted data from electronic case files to a deidentified database for analysis. The variables were coded directly from FTAC's case management system and so reflect factors presumed to be directly relevant to threat assessment and decision-making. The dataset comprised 2,118 files compiled by FTAC from 2013 to 2016. All indicators were coded by trained FTAC staff during case management, and transferred to a searchable database by researchers. Researchers did not make any of the 'judgements' or ratings reported. Hence, there is no information on interrater reliability. However, the data are expert descriptions or judgements made by FTAC staff working in small teams comprising mental health nurses, clinical psychologists, forensic psychiatrists, and police.

Variables

Concerning behaviour. Behaviours causing concern were described by 38 variables, 35 descriptive variables and 3 judgement categorisations (see Table 1).

(INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE)

Mental disorder. Dependent on the threat posed, some cases are taken on for active management and others are not. Upon escalation, more in-depth data relating to mental health are collected. In some cases, the individuals are subject to clinical interview by FTAC staff. In the majority of cases, local mental health services are involved in treatment and management. Hence for each case the present dataset includes dichotomous (absent/present)

classifications for a range of diagnosed mental disorders. 'Not assessed' is not missing, rather the data were not collected as the case was not taken on for active management**.**

Concerns evoked. FTAC staff record a judgment about the nature of concerns evoked by the presenting individual's behaviour. These are described in Table 2.

(INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE)

Management. FTAC records 16 actions taken as part of an individuals' management plan, as can be seen in Table 3.

(INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE)

Analytical Strategy

The analysis proceeded in two phases. The first phase used cluster analysis to identify sub-groups of concerning behaviours. We used the two-step cluster analysis function in Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 (IBM, 2017). Cluster analysis identifies homogenous groups of cases where the grouping is not known. The objects of the clusters are the cases, and the attributes by which they are clustered are the variables. The result is homogenous groups of cases that share a set of attributes. First, the two-step cluster analysis function in SPSS computes pre-clusters, which reduces the size of the matrix of distances between all possible pairs of cases. This allows for handling large amounts of data quickly. The data were categorical, and so the log-likelihood distance measure was used. Second, the nature of the clusters is determined by a hierarchical clustering algorithm. Hierarchical clustering is used to compute solutions from 1 to n, in which at n solutions, each case is a cluster. The optimal number of clusters is determined by Shwarz's Bayesian criterion (BIC).

One way to measure the homogeneity of the cluster solution is the silhouette measure of cohesion and separation. This measure articulates how cohesive the clusters are within themselves and how separate they are from one another. Potential values range from -1 to +1.

In a perfect solution, the within-cluster distances are small and the between-cluster distances are large. This would be represented by a value close to 1. If the inverse is true, a value close to -1 would be expected. To guide interpretation, the values are summarised as poor, fair or good in the model summary generated by SPSS. A value summarised as fair, for example, would indicate a fair degree of separation (the clusters are fairly distinct from one another) and cohesion (the clusters are fairly homogenous within themselves). This can further be seen when examining the reported frequencies across the profiles identified in the results tables.

The second phase used bi-variate analysis (chi-square) to examine the prevalence of mental disorder, the concerns evoked, and the management of the five profiles identified.

Results

The clusters identified at each component were labelled by interpreting the presenting pattern of indicators. A table detailing the prevalence of all concerning behaviours for the five profiles can be found in Table S1 in the supplementary materials. In the following section we summarise the main findings as figures to highlight the most salient features of each profile (see Figure 1).

Concerning behaviours

Cluster analysis of *concerning behaviours* identified five clusters. The analysis disaggregated 'communicators' into three styles of concerning behaviour: *incoherent offline, incoherent online,* and *angry/abusive communicators*, and 'approachers' into two styles of concerning behaviours: *concerning* and *problematic approachers.* Given that the components of these categories are not exclusive, these were labelled according to the predominant type of behaviour. The silhouette measure of cohesion was 0.4, which is fair.

Incoherent offline communicators

Incoherent offline communicators are characterised by communicating via letter (offline) (100%), where communications have largely been classified by assessors as

incoherent (70.9%). 49.6% of communications are classified as ‘request for help’. None of these individuals made an approach (0%), and none (0%) sent emails or utilised online medias.

Incoherent online communicators

These communicators predominantly sent emails (62.5%) where 70.3% of communications were classified by FTAC as incoherent. 20.6% made telephone calls. Only 13% sent letters, and just 4.2% attempted to breach security cordons (all failed). In some instances, communicators progress to make an approach. This may be to ‘deliver’ further communications, or as a result of a progression in concerning behaviour from communicator to approacher. The small proportion of communicators who made an approach likely reflects the small proportion of FTAC referrals who both communicate and approach.

Angry/Abusive communicators

Angry/abusive communicators are predominantly classified by communications classified by assessors as angry (88.5%), abusive (58.7%), and demanding (48.0%). 57.1% of communications were also classified as incoherent. Communications were predominantly letters (55.2%), although these individuals also sent emails (27.8%), and made telephone calls (18.7%). *Angry/abusive communicators* were the most threatening where 34.9% made indirect threats, and 36.9% made direct threats. Less than 1% made an approach.

Concerning approachers

Concerning approachers were classified by assessors as concerning (100.0%), made an approach at site (82.5%), yet most did not attempt to breach security barriers (86.7%). Of those who did, 9.8% failed and 3.5% were successful. Few sent communications (letters (1.7%), emails (0.7%), telephone calls (0%)).

Problematic approachers

Problematic approachers were classified by assessors as problematic (91.5%), made an approach to site (81.2%), where 83.0% attempted to breach security cordons yet failed, just 3.1% were successful. Again, few sent communications (letters (1.8%), emails (0.4%), telephone calls (0%). Of note, 7.2% of these individuals were recorded as committing a violent approach.

(INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE)

Concerns evoked

The next phase of the analysis examined how the different profiles of cases evoked a range of concerns recorded by FTAC assessors (Table 4). These are assessments of potential risk made by FTAC practitioners, not actual behaviours. *Incoherent offline communicators* were less likely to evoke concerns overall. Specifically, they were less likely to evoke concerns about committing violence against the principal focus of their fixation, or to the police. They were less likely to evoke concerns about embarrassing the police, causing harm to the principal focus of their fixation, disrupting events, being time consuming, high risk, or causing distress to the principal focus of their fixation.

Incoherent online communicators were not more or less likely to evoke any of the concerns recorded by FTAC assessors.

Angry/abusive communicators were significantly more likely to evoke a range of concerns. Assessors were more likely to be concerned about the risk of violence to the principal of their focus, to police, causing harm to the principal of their focus, being a drain on resources, as well as time consuming, and causing distress to staff.

Concerning approachers were less likely to evoke concerns about the risk of violence to the principal focus of their fixation, or to cause distress to staff. However, they were more likely to evoke concerns about causing embarrassment to police, disrupting events, being time consuming, and high risk.

Lastly, *problematic approachers* were more likely to evoke concerns about committing violence against police, disrupting events, and to be considered high risk. They were less likely to be considered a drain on resources, or to cause distress to staff.

(INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE)

Mental disorder

Table 5 details the prevalence of diagnosed mental disorder across the five profiles of concerning behaviour. *Incoherent offline communicators* were more likely to be diagnosed with no disorder, and specifically less likely to be diagnosed with bipolar disorder, or a personality disorder. *Incoherent online communicators* were less likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia. *Angry/abusive communicators* were more likely to be diagnosed with depression, or a personality disorder. *Concerning approachers* were less likely to be diagnosed with no mental disorder, and more likely to be diagnosed with bipolar disorder, psychosis, or conversely, not be assessed. *Problematic approachers* were more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia.

(INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE)

Management

Table 6 summarises the prevalence of actions of FTAC staff taken to manage the cases across the five profiles identified. *Incoherent offline communicators* were less likely to be subject to a professionals meeting, or a meeting in a public place. They were less likely to be arrested, be referred to a Community Mental Health Team (CMHT), sectioned under the mental health act by external or FTAC police, referred to UK police, detained involuntarily in hospital or have their information circulated as a briefing note to police or criminal intelligence. It was more likely in these instances that no further action was taken.

Incoherent online communicators were more likely to be subject to a professionals meeting and to be referred to international police.

Angry/abusive communicators were more likely to be arrested, subject to a police or criminal intelligence briefing, or referred to UK police. It was less likely in these instances that no further action was taken.

Concerning approachers were more likely to have a meeting with FTAC staff in a public place, be referred to CMHT, subject to a police or criminal intelligence briefing, sectioned under the mental health act by FTAC police, detained in hospital involuntarily, and subject to a UK access referral.

Problematic approachers were less likely to be referred to international police. These individuals were more likely to have a meeting with FTAC in a public place, be sectioned under the mental health act by external, and FTAC police, and to be detained in hospital involuntarily.

(INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE)

Discussion

The present study identifies five styles of concerning behaviour. We disaggregate the approacher/communicator dichotomy in an attempt to present a more nuanced insight into a complex and heterogenous population. We identified five styles of concerning behaviour, *incoherent online, incoherent offline, and angry/abusive communicators,* and *concerning* and *problematic approachers.* Once disaggregated, we examined the prevalence of diagnosed mental disorder, the nature of concerns evoked, and finally the actions FTAC staff took to manage these individuals. The purpose of doing so was to present an insight for both practice and policy into the demand on resources these individuals pose, as well as data-driven evidence to inform triaging of large volumes of cases. It is important to note that FTAC's remit is not to 'predict' who will go on to commit violence. Rather, the service applies a public health approach to reduce harm, both among those who are targeted, as well as among the pathologically fixated (Barry-Walsh et al., 2020). Hence our results are likely most

relevant to informing the management of these populations. In the following section we briefly discuss our key findings, before considering how our results could inform policy and practice.

Incoherent online communicators

We identified a group of communicators who predominantly use email to send threatening communications. Previous research often fails to disaggregate communicators as they are most often employed as a comparison group when comparing communicators and approachers. However, disaggregating communicators could provide a more nuanced insight into the pathologically fixated and provide practitioners with further evidence to aid decision-making.

Research on threatening communications does not generally differentiate between those who operate online or offline. However, this could be important to consider. Very few of these individuals sent letters or engaged in other forms of offline communication, such as sending packages. The former requires somewhat less effort, time, and resources. Hence there may be important differences between subjects who operate online versus offline. It may be useful to consider the Online Disinhibition Effect (ODE), (Suler, 2004). This is an observed effect that may go some way to account for why online behaviour differs from offline behaviour.

Whilst online, some people may behave more intensely, or act in a way that they would not when offline (Suler, 2004). Six factors are proposed that work together or in isolation to increase disinhibition; dissociative anonymity, invisibility, asynchronicity, solipsistic introjection, dissociative imagination, and minimisation of authority. Individual differences, such as personality differences, may also influence the extent of any disinhibition. Some research finds empirical support for the ODE and the factors that contribute to it (Joinson, 2007; Lapidot-Lefler & Barak, 2012). Yet within the stalking

domain (which has relevance here), many argue against differentiating between offline and online stalking, finding little empirical evidence for any meaningful differences, (Sheridan & Grant, 2007). The nature of online communication has changed significantly via the ubiquitous use of social media across multiple platforms since the abovementioned research was conducted. However, whilst the pathologically fixated and those who stalk amongst the general public may share a common genesis, differences are apparent. One such difference to consider is the affordance of opportunities to harass public figures offline (given security, cordons, etc), versus the affordance of opportunities to harass the general public offline. Hence the online space may afford those who fixate on public figures with greater opportunity to at least communicate with the target of their fixation. For instance, crossing security cordons or evading security at Buckingham Palace is somewhat more of a threshold to cross than turning up at a member of the publics' place of work.

The difference observed between online and offline communicators may also be due to characteristics of the sample. For instance, an examination of 400 referrals to the Queensland Fixated Threat Assessment Centre (QFTAC), Pathé et al (2016) inferred the notable lack of harassment via social media may be due to the demographic make-up of their sample. Subjects were predominantly in their mid-fifties, and hence may have been less inclined to employ relatively new, virtual medias in their communications. This may also be true in the present sample. However, demographic information was not available as the data were de-identified. It is also important to consider how social media use may have progressed since 2016 (the present sample dealt with cases referred to the unit 2013-2016). Regardless, it may be worthy to consider what this could mean for new generations of fixated individuals. Specifically, how *online communicators* may evolve, and what the implications of this might be for managing these populations in the future. Research in analogous domains, for example, demonstrates the temporal fluxes of risk factors (Gill et al., 2016).

Incoherent offline communicators

Incoherent offline communicators predominantly sent communications in the form of letters which assessors classified as incoherent. None communicated virtually. As previously discussed, the process of sending a letter is inferred to be more demanding in terms of time and resources. Hence, this may offer some insight into the nature of these communicators. However, again, this may also reflect the nature of the sample, specifically those fixated upon the Queen. In the present sample, it is important to note that almost half of FTAC's referrals come from the Queen's correspondence staff. The Queen does not have an email address and so letters are the predominant form of communication. This highlights another important consideration: situational and selection factors.

The role of both selection and situational factors in the study of criminal offending is well established. Specifically, in relation to grievance-fuelled violent offenders, selection effects and dynamic interactions among contextual factors have been examined empirically (Clemmow et al., 2019; Corner et al., 2019). For instance, the process of coming to commit terrorist violence, fuelled by an ideology by definition, is conceived of, in part, as the outcome of interactions among individual-level characteristics or vulnerabilities, converging in time and space with situational and contextual factors (Bouhana, 2019). The role of ideology is complex, but not necessarily *causal* in trajectories to terrorist violence.

Here, it may be useful to consider the focus of fixation akin to ideology. Certain types of people with certain types of characteristics (perhaps predisposed to fixation), may be more likely to fixate on certain types of targets than others. This could be because of multiple self-selection, social-selection, or situational factors. Therefore, the present cluster raises important research questions about the relevance of these factors in the pathologically fixated. Furthermore, as new technologies and new generations of communicators emerge, those who utilise offline medias may decrease. This remains to be seen and, again, is worthy

of future exploration. Given the recent pandemic, situational limitations on opportunities to interact with physical settings may again have affected how these individuals harass their targets.

When examining the differences between online and offline harassers, it may be of use to draw from the stalking literature. Cyberstalking has garnered increasing academic and public attention as evolving technologies provide individuals with new opportunities and means to stalk their victims. Online and offline stalkers share a common motivation, however, some differences may be apparent (Mansourabadi, 2014). In the present case, offline communicators were less likely to evoke concerns, more likely to have no diagnosed mental disorder, and were significantly more likely to require no further action in terms of their management. Online communicators were less likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia, and more likely to be referred to international police. The latter is likely a key factor in explaining the differences observed between these two profiles. Inference would suggest that in the present case, situational factors influence the mode of communication preferred by online communicators. Specifically, that those operating outside of the UK may be more inclined to send emails, rather than post letters internationally. Equally, nline communicators operating internationally may be limited in the extent to which they can approach the target of their fixation, and hence may rely more on online modes of communication. This would accord with the stalking literature which finds little differences in terms of motivation, however finds new media affords greater opportunities for stalkers to harass their victims.

Angry/abusive communicators

Angry/abusive communicators sent letters, emails, and made telephone calls, the content of which was deemed angry, abusive, demanding and/or threatening. These individuals provoked a range of concerns about committing violence, causing harm, and

distress. They were more likely to be diagnosed with depression, and/or a personality disorder. Research consistently finds a significant association between depression, anxiety and anger (Genovese, Dalrymple, Chelminski, & Zimmerman, 2017; Hofmeijer-Sevink et al., 2012; Melartin et al., 2002; Regier et al., 1993; Zimmerman et al., 2017, 2018; Zimmerman et al., 2019). Similarly, personality disorder is often associated with anger and aggression, including violence (Gilbert & Daffern, 2011). This could account somewhat for present findings.

Importantly, this profile appears concerning. Whilst very few of these communicators went on to make an approach, this should not be taken to mean that, without intervention, these individuals would not progress on towards more concerning behaviour. Rather this is likely a reflection of the successful management of these cases by FTAC. FTAC applies a public health approach to address the underlying vulnerability, most often in these cases, untreated mental disorder, to not only reduce the risk of violence, but to improve the quality of life of those referred to its services. Additionally, those who receive threatening communications, particularly angry/abusive communications, may not be at imminent risk of physical harm, but may suffer *psychological* harm or distress. Therefore, it is important to manage these populations effectively, regardless of whether there is a risk of physical violence or not. Disaggregating communicators and approachers as we have done in the present study, may provide a more nuanced insight into the needs and challenges of a heterogenous population, underscoring the importance of intervening amongst the pathologically fixated *before* an event occurs. Particularly since research demonstrates that those who do communicate, may be at a heightened risk of approaching in the future (Eke, Meloy, Brooks, Jean, & Hilton, 2014; Warren, Mullen, & Ogloff, 2011; Warren, Mullen, Thomas, Ogloff, & Burgess, 2008; Warren, Ogloff, & Mullen, 2013).

Approachers: concerning versus problematic

Approachers were disaggregated into two communities, defined by whether individuals attempted to breach security cordons (problematic) or not (concerning). Both types of approachers were more likely to be suffering from psychotic disorder, either psychosis or schizophrenia. This accords with previous research, as described above. More generally, approachers were classified most saliently by the absence of any communications. However, previous research has reported significant associations between making an approach and the number and means of previous communications (James et al., 2010; Dietz et al., 1991). Again, one reason for the difference observed here may be FTAC's success. Specifically, early intervention with communicators may successfully mitigate the risk of these types of individuals progressing to make an approach. Hence it would follow that the remaining population of those who approach without previously coming to the attention of FTAC, would present differently to communicators.

Whilst a classifier capable of accurately predicting who will go on to make an approach may be unattainable (and to some extent, not warranted given the services focus on harm reduction), robust empirical evidence that offers insight into the differences between these two populations, alongside human professional judgements, may facilitate better prevention and demand reduction through better evidenced decision-making. The demand on the service for instance is evident in simply examining the number of referrals received in just 4 years.

In terms of their management, very few of those who made an approach were criminally prosecuted. FTAC aims to divert the vulnerable away from criminal charges and towards more appropriate health services, where their concerning behaviour and level of risk is usually attributable to untreated mental disorder (Barry-Walsh et al., 2020). We discuss

this further in the following section where we consider the policy and practical implications of our findings.

Policy implications

Elaborating how FTAC managed the five profiles of concerning behaviour provides policy-makers and practitioners with a data-driven insight into the range of services, resources, and collaborations required to effectively manage such a complex population. As described above, table 6 highlights the lack of criminal prosecutions pursued, where police and health professionals have worked jointly to divert the mentally unwell towards services, to not only reduce the risk of violence, but potentially more importantly, to reduce harm to both the fixated and their targets. Many are often only concerned with who will go on to commit violence. This is often the focus of much of the research output in this space. Of course, this is an important research endeavour, however for policy and practice, it is potentially more important to disregard the perhaps futile task of trying to predict who will commit violence, and instead focus on the effective allocation of resources to reduce harm (Barry-Walsh et al., 2020). This is the aim of applying a public health approach to tackle crime and violence.

For instance, a public health approach to violent crime in Scotland has largely been viewed as successful, with calls for London to implement a similar strategy to tackle a growing knife crime problem (Torjesen, 2018). Advocates suggest implementing the 'Scottish model' to identify those most vulnerable and improve their immediate situation, whilst inoculating the general population through education and changing social norms. Taking a public health approach and identifying those most vulnerable, early on, and implementing evidenced-based interventions, may 'deactivate' some of the drivers of violence. This may have far wider reaching outcomes in terms of public health in general, not only in terms of violence or crime.

Similarly, noteworthy for policy-makers is the general success of the FTAC model in countering grievance-fuelled violence. Beyond the pathologically fixated, this has application across a range of violent crimes where intelligence-sharing is key, including terrorism, mass murder, and more. Specifically, policy should consider implementing the sort of data-sharing and collaborative working between health and police, exemplified here. For example, several collaborative police–mental health models that are designed to address the mental health facet of violent extremism exist. These include the UK's PREVENT strategy, the Netherlands National Police Threat Management Team, and the Queensland Fixated Threat Assessment Centre (QFTAC), modelled on the United Kingdom's FTAC (Pathé et al., 2018). Within QFTAC, information is shared between the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and Queensland Health. Their Memorandum of Understanding (2016) sets out exemptions to the duty of confidentiality, based on the interests of public safety. In a space where data sharing in often inhibited by confidentiality or security, such a model may provide practitioners with more effective tools to combat grievance-fuelled violence in general.

Conclusion

It is important to consider the limitations of the present study, and how this may relate to any practical implications of our findings. The cluster solutions are not absolutes. Whilst we report significant differences between the profiles, it is imperative to examine the frequencies at which these indicators occur when thinking about any practical applications. We do not suggest that these profiles be interpreted as a categorical typology to be applied dichotomously upon incoming referrals. Rather we suggest this framework could act as additional guidance for threat assessment professionals when making decisions about case management or risk escalation, alongside human professional judgements. Hence, the potential to misinterpret these findings is one we caution against. None of these cluster solutions are exclusive. Therefore, we present our findings as guidance to aid the

interpretation of *patterns* of indicators, alongside more in-depth, professional judgements. It is important to examine the non-significant frequencies reported here and avoid applying this conceptualisation as a categorical typology of 'types of people'.

In addition, the present data refers to a UK-based service, who deal predominantly with individuals from the UK. FTAC does undertake work internationally, when an individual from the US, for instance, begins targeting the Royal Family, however the majority of cases are domestic. Hence the generalisability of our results may be limited to the UK. However, the policy and practice implications we outline have relevance internationally, as is demonstrated by the expanding international adoption of the FTAC model in tackling grievance-fuelled violence.

Furthermore, it was not possible to examine interrater reliability of the judgements made by FTAC staff. As described, this is because the judgements were made by forensic psychologists and psychiatrists, nurses, police, and other professional staff at FTAC. Whilst these are expert judgements, there may be subjectivity in any decision-making. It is important to consider the implications of this here. Given the exploratory nature of the present study, we consider this an acceptable limitation, however future research may wish to adopt a confirmatory research design to test the hypotheses generated by our findings.

Lastly, within the present dataset, those deemed to pose a significant enough threat were escalated to active case management, where data was gathered about subjects' mental health (analysed here) and motivation. As a next step, we would consider how these types of concerning behaviour may relate to different motivations.

In conclusion, rather than utilising research-derived outcomes (e.g., approacher, communicator), the present study provided a data-driven classification of both outcome behaviours of interest, as well as the constellation of factors they are more likely associated

with. The approach goes beyond the current state of knowledge which demonstrates the co-presence of certain factors with certain behaviours and takes steps toward explaining their relevance. Early interventions with those who send problematic communications may mitigate the risk of these individuals progressing towards making an approach. Hence, we present our findings as further evidence of the success of FTAC and contribute to the call for analogous fields to adopt a similar, multiagency, intelligence-sharing, approach to combatting the full spectrum of lone-actor grievance-fuelled violence.

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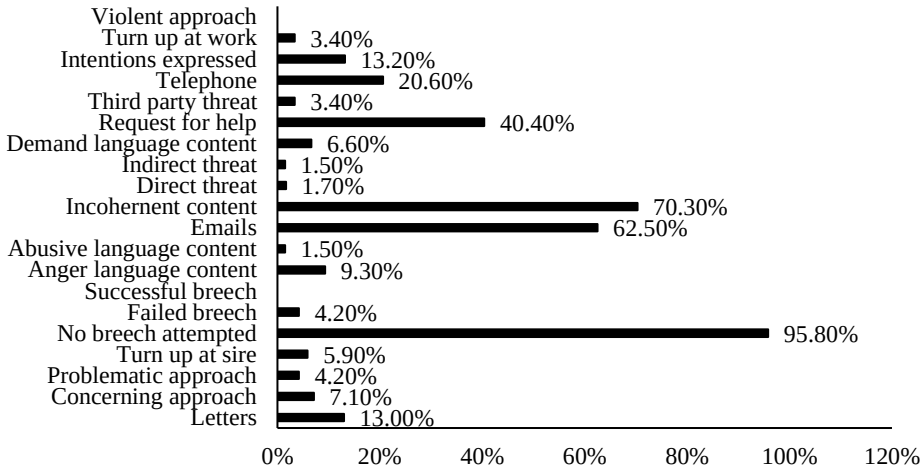
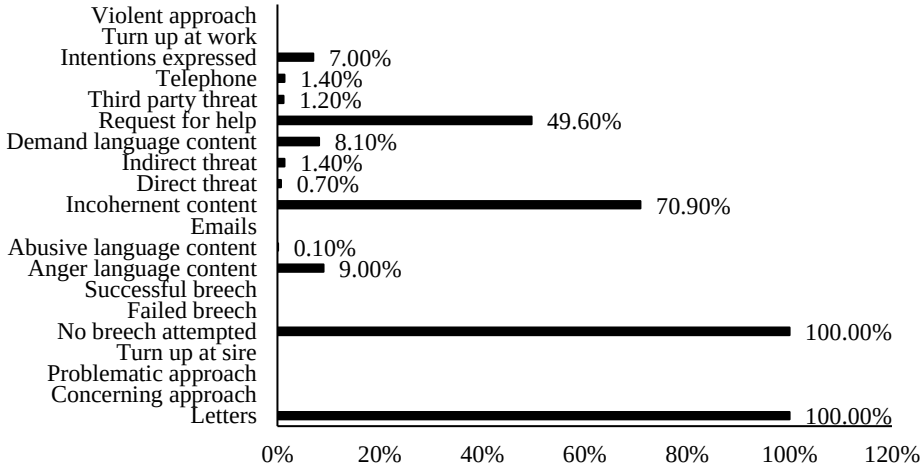
Figure 1. Most salient features of each of the five profiles detected by cluster analysis of concerning behaviours.

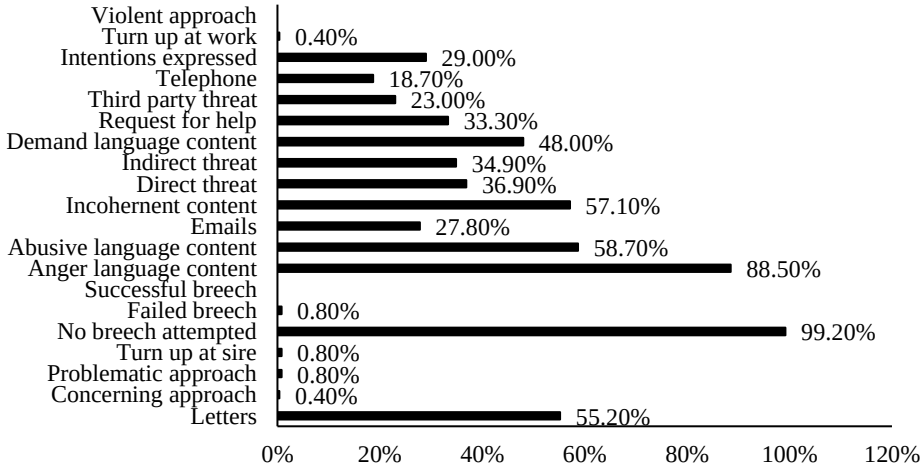
Incoherent online communicators



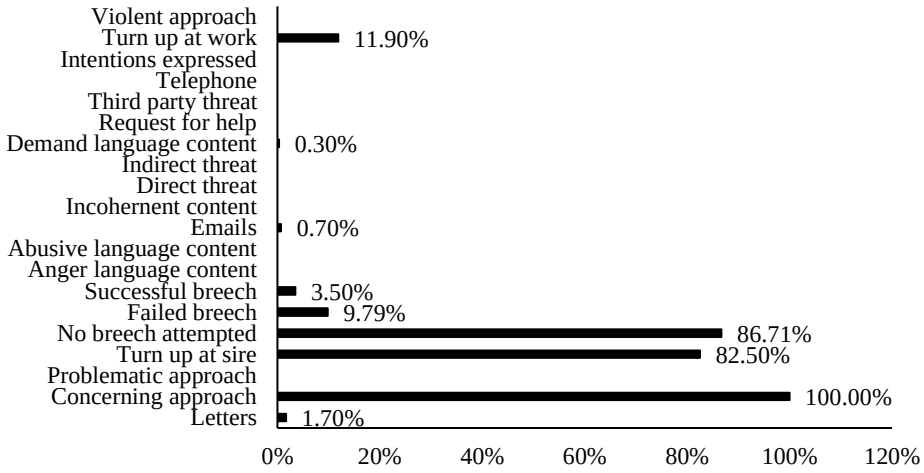
Incoherent offline communicators



Angry/Abusive communicators



Concerning approach



Problematic approach

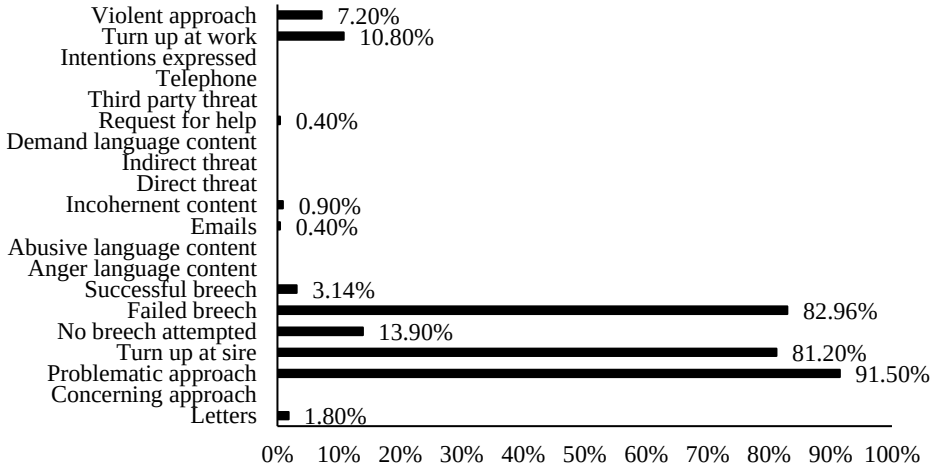


Table 1. Concerning behaviours recorded by FTAC

Concerning behaviour	Description
2+ people	Fixated on 2 or more people
Abusive language content	Communications were classified as abusive
Amorous language content	Communications contained amorous language
Anger language content	Communications were classified as angry
Blogs	Individual used internet blogs to harass principal
Concerning approach	Individual made a concerning approach
Demand language content	Communications classified as demanding
Direct threat	Direct threat to principal in communications
Emails	Individual sent email communications
End of tether language	Communications contained end of tether language
Failed breach	Individual attempted but failed to breach security cordons
Fax	Individual sent faxes
Incoherent content	Communications classified as incoherent
Indirect threat	Indirect threat to principal in communications
Intentions expressed	Individual expressed intentions in communications
Letters	Individual sent letter communications
Mass mailings	Individual sent mass mailings
No breach attempted	Individual did not attempt to breach security cordons
Offer of help	Communications contained offer of help to principal
Packages	Individual sent packages
Problematic approach	Individual made a problematic approach
Public distribution	Individual disturbed public materials about principal
Request for help	Communications contained requests for help
Sexualised content	Communications contained sexualised content
Social media	Individual use social media to harass principal

Spurious legal complaints	Individual began spurious legal complaints
Successful breach	Individual successfully breached security cordons
Telephone	Individual made telephone calls
Third party threat	Threat via a third party in communications
Turn up at event	Individual turned up at an event
Turn up at home	Individual turned up at principals' home
Turn up at more than one location	Individual turned up at more than one location
Turn up at site	Individual turned up at site
Turn up at work	Individual turned up at principals' place of work
Twitter	Individual used twitter to harass principal
Violent approach	Individual made a violent approach
Weapon possession	Individual made an approach in possession of a weapon
Web pages	Individual created webpages to harass principal

Table 2. Concerns evoked recorded by FTAC staff

Concerns evoked	Description
Disruption of events	Concerns individual may disrupt events
Distress to principal	Concerns individual may cause distress to principal
Distress to staff	Concerns individual may cause distress to FTAC staff (psychological distress short of psychological harm)
Drain on resources	Concerns individual may draw heavily on resources
Embarrassment to police	Concerns the individual may cause embarrassment to the police
Embarrassment to principal	Concerns the individual may cause embarrassment to principal
Harm to principle	Concerns the individual may cause harm to principal (psychological harm short of physical violence)
High risk	Concerns individual may be high risk
Time consumption	Concerns individual may be time consuming
Violence to police	Concerns the individual poses a risk of violence towards the police
Violence to principal	Concerns the individual poses a risk of violence towards the target of their fixation (principal)

Table 3. Actions taken by FTAC staff

Action taken	Description
Arrest	Individual arrested
ASBO	Individual issued with an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO)
Border security	Border police notified about individual to monitor entry/exit to country
Briefing/CRIMINT	A briefing note was circulated amongst police/criminal intelligence about individual's
CMHT	Individual referred to Community Mental Health Team
GP	Individual referred to their GP (general practitioner)
Home visit	FTAC staff attended a visit at the individual's home
Hospital detention	Individual detained in hospital
International medical	Individual referred to an international medical team
International police	Individual referred to international police
Judicial	Individual subject to criminal proceedings
Meeting in public place	Staff met individual in a public place such as a coffee chop
No further action	No further action taken
PNC circulation	Information about the individual was circulated across the Police National Computer
Professionals meeting	Staff convened a meeting with other service professionals to discuss individual's
S136 external	Individual sectioned under the mental health act by external police
S136 FTAC	Individual sectioned under the mental health act by FTAC police
SRP/FAST	Stalking risk assessment/FAST assessment
UK access referral	Individual referred to single access path
UK police	Individual referred to UK police
Voluntary hospital	Individual voluntarily admitted to hospital
Words of advice	Police offered advice to individual

Table 4. Profiles of concerning behaviour and the concerns they evoked. The below is a summary of several crosstab (chi-square) analyses. Crosstab analysis was performed for each row. The p value reported is the overall value obtained from the chi-square analysis. Post-hoc analyses calculated the significance level for each profile from the adjusted standardised residuals. Bonferroni corrected p value = .005.

			Communicators		Approachers		
	X^2	p	Incoherent offline	Incoherent online	Angry/Abusive	Concerning	Problematic
Disruption of events	72.57	.000	3.7%***	7.6%	10.3%	17.8%***	14.3%***
Distress to principal	12.83	.007	0.7%***	1.7%	3.6%	1.4%	3.1%
Distress to staff	80.38	.000	16.9%	22.1%	34.1%***	9.4%***	7.6%***
Drain on resources	35.89	.000	11.7%	14.0%	18.7%***	8.7%	2.2%***
Embarrassment to police	117.17	.000	11.4%***	15.4%	17.1%	38.5%***	23.8%
Embarrassment to principal	7.36	n.s.	20.2%	20.8%	27.0%	18.2%	20.2%
Harm to principle	66.65	.000	4.0%***	7.1%	17.9%***	3.8%	9.9%
High risk	92.84	.000	5.1%***	6.6%	13.9%	14.3%***	24.2%***
Time consumption	114.2	.000	13.3%***	24.3%	29.4%***	40.9%***	17.9%
Violence to police	79.31	.000	1.0%***	3.2%	12.3%***	5.2%	8.5%***
Violence to principal	203.55	.000	1.2%***	2.9%	21.4%***	1.0%***	7.6%

Table 5. Profiles of concerning behaviour and rates of diagnosed mental disorder. The below is a summary of several crosstab (chi-square) analyses. Crosstab analysis was performed for each row. The p value reported is the overall value obtained from the chi-square analysis. Post-hoc analyses calculated the significance level for each profile from the adjusted standardised residuals. Bonferroni corrected p value = .005.

			Communicators			Approachers	
	X^2	p	Incoherent offline	Incoherent online	Angry/Abusive	Concerning	Problematic
Bipolar	16.42	.002	1.8%***	2.90%	2.40%	5.9%***	4.90%
Delusional disorder	4.24	n.s.	5.30%	6.60%	4.00%	4.20%	3.60%
Depression	24.78	.000	1.00%	0.70%	4.8%***	0.70%	1.30%
Learning difficulties	2.73	n.s.	0.20%	0.50%	0.40%	0.70%	0.90%
None	73.43	.000	21.4%***	17.60%	15.90%	0%***	19.70%
Not assessed	19.72	.001	28.10%	32.10%	24.60%	36.7%***	21.10%
Other	13.19	.010	1.70%	1.50%	4.40%	4.50%	2.20%
Personality disorder	23.46	.000	1.7%***	3.90%	7.1%***	1.70%	3.60%
Psychosis	11.12	.030	2.70%	2.20%	3.20%	6.3%***	3.10%
Schizophrenia	25.5	.000	25.10%	20.6%***	25.00%	27.60%	38.6%***

Table 6. Profiles of concerning behaviour and their management. The below is a summary of several crosstab (chi-square) analyses. Crosstab analysis was performed for each row. The p value reported is the overall value obtained from the chi-square analysis. Post-hoc analyses calculated the significance level for each profile from the adjusted standardised residuals. Bonferroni corrected p value = .005.

			Communicators			Approachers	
	X^2	p	Incoherent offline	Incoherent online	Angry/Abusive communicator	Concerning	Problematic
Arrest	28.66	.000	0.0%***	0.7%	3.2%***	2.4%	2.2%
ASBO	4.18	n.s.	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Border police	12.26	n.s.	3.1%	4.7%	2.0%	5.9%	6.7%
Briefing/CRIMINT	40.21	.000	17.1%***	26.7%	29.4%***	31.1%***	19.3%
CMHT	27.55	.000	39.6%***	43.6%	50.0%	55.9%***	44.4%
GP	6.39	n.s.	25.9%	22.8%	20.2%	23.1%	19.7%
Home visit	8.34	n.s.	2.4%	4.2%	5.2%	4.2%	1.8%
Hospital detention	87.80	.000	1.3%***	1.0%	1.2%	6.6%***	11.7%***
International medical	5.35	n.s.	1.5%	1.5%	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%
International police	19.1	.000	8.8%	11.3%***	6.7%	5.9%	2.2%***
Judicial	1.79	n.s.	0.2%	0.2%	0.5%	0.7%	0.4%
Meeting in public place	131.53	.000	0.4%***	1.5%	0.4%	12.2%***	7.6%***
No further action	28.5	.000	38.4%***	32.6%	23.8%***	31.8%	25.1%
PNC circulation	6.2	n.s.	0.4%	1.0%	1.6%	0.7%	0.0%
Professionals meeting	20.38	.000	1.1%***	4.7%***	2.4%	4.5%	3.6%
Sectioned (external)	68.82	.000	0.1%***	1.7%	1.2%	2.8%	8.1%***
Sectioned (FTAC)	77.63	.000	0.1%***	0.0%	0.4%	4.2%***	6.3%***
SRP/FAST	3.07	n.s.	0.5%	1.0%	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%
UK access referral	20.10	.000	0.6%	0.0%	0.4%	2.8%***	2.2%
UK police	56.58	.000	7.6%***	9.8%	22.6%***	7.3%	6.7%
Voluntary hospital	6.50	.166	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.7%	0.9%

Words of advice	12.28	.011	1.2%	2.9%	1.2%	4.2%	2.7%