

**EXPLORING NETWORKED DYNAMICS OF POLICE-COMMUNITY
COOPERATION: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AFFORDANCES,
DIGITAL EFFICACY, SURVEILLANCE, AND PERCEPTION OF THE
POLICE FORCES IN THE UK**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Submitted (May 2026)

This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

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Abstract

Social media has become a prominent environment in which police–community relations are experienced and interpreted. This transformation calls for a reconsideration of public’s intention to cooperate with the police. Existing research has established that trust, legitimacy, procedural justice, and police effectiveness help explain intention to cooperate with the police. However, less is known about how this intention is affected by social media and by digital control mechanisms. This thesis brings perceptions of policing and perceived digital control mechanisms on social media into a single analytical framework to explain intention to cooperate with the police. It also conceptualises and empirically tests digital efficacy. To explain these relationships, the study draws on Foucault’s concept of governmentality. The study is based on an online survey of 440 participants in the United Kingdom. Two structural models were tested using structural equation modelling. The findings indicate that procedural justice and trust in the police have positive direct effects on intention to cooperate with the police. The direct effect of perceived police effectiveness on intention to cooperate with the police is not significant. Self-censorship on social media positively mediates the effects of procedural justice and trust in the police on intention to cooperate with the police, but negatively mediates the effect of perceived police effectiveness on this outcome. In the first model, none of the hypothesised mediating effects of perceived social media affordances were supported; however, perceived interaction affordance has a significant direct effect on intention to cooperate with the police. In the second model, perceived control on social media positively affects both intention to cooperate with the police and digital efficacy. Perceived surveillance on social media has no direct effect on cooperation intention, but has an indirect effect through perceived interaction affordance and a positive direct effect on digital efficacy. Overall, this thesis contributes to research on cooperation with the police by situating it within the social media context, while also advancing the concept of digital efficacy.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my primary supervisor, Dr Chamil Rathnayake, for his guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous support throughout the development of this thesis. I am also grateful to my second supervisor, Dr Michael Higgins, for her helpful comments and advice at every stage of this research. Their contributions have been invaluable.

I am thankful to Dr Esperanza Miyake and Dr Fiona McKay for taking part in my annual review meetings and for offering insightful comments and suggestions. My thanks also go to my examiners, Dr Camila Mont'Alverne and Dr Ben Collier, for their thoughtful feedback, which helped me strengthen the final version of this thesis. I would also like to acknowledge the scholarship provided by the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Türkiye.

I am deeply thankful to my parents, my sister, and my parents-in-law for their kindness and support over the years. Finally, I am especially grateful to my wife, Tuğyam, for her patience, understanding, and quiet strength throughout this journey. Her calm presence and unwavering belief in me helped me through the most demanding stages of this PhD.

Word count: 61,203

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Police-community relationships have been transformed by changing social structures and communication styles. The positive relationship between the public and the police is a foundation for maintaining social order and promoting compliance. Police–community communication is changing as social media becomes part of everyday life. In the UK, police forces use social media for public communication and engagement, as well as for investigative and operational purposes, including monitoring and data use (Egawhary, 2019). Research on police Twitter use also shows that social media is used to share information with the public and to request assistance in missing-person investigations (Ferguson & Soave, 2021). Police use of social media highlights the need to reassess how social media dynamics affect cooperation between the police and the community, particularly in the UK, where policing depends heavily on public cooperation and legitimacy.

Individuals' intention to cooperate with the police is often influenced by their perceptions of the police, including trust, legitimacy, procedural justice, and effectiveness. Social media may also affect this intention, while influencing individuals' sense of being able to act together online. As information about the police is seen, circulated, and discussed on social media, perceived social media affordances, together with perceptions of surveillance and control, may inform individuals' orientations towards the police as well as their collective action online. For this reason, perceptions of policing and perceived digital control mechanisms need to be addressed within the same framework. This study examines how perceived social media affordances and self-censorship on social media mediate the relationships between these constructs and intention to cooperate with the police and digital efficacy.

To explain these relationships, the study draws on Foucault's concept of governmentality. Within this framework, behaviour is shaped by the conditions under which individuals act (Dean, 2010). In social media environments, algorithms organise visibility and structure the content users encounter; this can affect attention,

expression, and online participation (Bucher, 2018). In this respect, governmentality provides a suitable theoretical framework for understanding these relationships.

Prior research indicates that willingness to cooperate with and support the police is closely tied to legitimacy and procedural justice, as well as to trust in the police and perceived police effectiveness (Tyler, 1990; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Jackson, 2014; Murphy et al., 2008; Murphy & Barkworth, 2014; Pehrson et al., 2017). In the UK context, research suggests that public cooperation with and support for the police is associated with perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy, trust in the police, and confidence in police effectiveness (Bradford, 2014; Bradford & Jackson, 2016; Hough et al., 2013; Tankebe, 2013). Although these relationships are well-established, less is known about how they operate on social media, where communication takes place through the affordances of different platforms. On platforms such as Twitter, where police-related discussion is public and visible, highly publicised incidents and media coverage of police misconduct may be followed by more negative public sentiment towards the police (Oglesby-Neal et al., 2019; Succar et al., 2024).

Social media affordances may shape how police actions are noticed and interpreted. An affordance refers to the action possibilities that emerge from actors engaging with a technology (Faraj & Azad, 2012). In policing, social media has become an important channel through which police communication reaches the public. A growing body of UK research has examined how social media platforms have become part of police communication and police–public relations (Crump, 2011; Deneff et al., 2013; Bullock, 2018; Egawhary, 2019; Ralph, 2022; Fielding, 2023). Nikolovska et al. (2020) found that, during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, most tweets by UK law enforcement agencies were not specifically about crime, although tweets about fraud, cybercrime, and domestic abuse increased significantly. In this thesis, perceived social media affordances are treated as mediating processes through which perceptions of policing and perceived digital control mechanisms may be linked to intention to cooperate with the police.

Surveillance and data-driven technologies are used in policing to enable monitoring (Sausdal, 2019; van Brakel, 2021). Behaviour becomes easier to monitor and track

through the data generated by personal devices (Walsh, 2023). Algorithmic systems rank and filter content in ways that organise online visibility and participation (Badouard et al., 2016; Willson, 2019). This also affects where attention goes and what users expect in response to what they share (Tufekci, 2015). When algorithms organise online visibility, users may feel less in control, more monitored, and more uncertain about whether their data is being used fairly on social media. These perceptions can indirectly regulate behaviour by shaping what users feel able or willing to say online. Over time, this may foster self-censorship and inhibit open expression (Sturges, 2008). Because self-censorship is shaped by individual factors (Bar-Tal, 2017b), these dynamics may also influence how people speak about the police, express support or criticism, and orient themselves towards cooperation. They may also affect whether people feel capable of participating effectively in digital spaces.

Social media platforms are part of how collective solidarity is expressed and how social participation takes place (Stewart & Schultze, 2019; Kajta et al., 2025). Collective efficacy describes neighbourhood settings in which residents trust one another, feel connected to their local area, and believe that others will act when problems arise (Brunton-Smith et al., 2018; Yesberg et al., 2023). However, this concept does not fully capture how similar capacities for collective influence are formed in digital environments. To address this gap, this thesis conceptualises and examines digital efficacy within the context of social media.

This thesis develops and tests two structural models. The first examines the effects of perceptions of policing on intention to cooperate with the police, while the second examines the effects of perceived digital control mechanisms on social media on both intention to cooperate with the police and digital efficacy. In both models, perceived social media affordances and self-censorship are treated as mediating processes. The thesis addresses the following research questions:

RQ1a: What are the effects of trust in the police, perceived legitimacy, perceived police effectiveness, and perceived procedural justice on UK residents' intention to cooperate with the police?

RQ1b: To what extent are the effects of these factors on intention to cooperate with the police mediated by perceived social media affordances and self-censorship on social media?

RQ2a: What are the effects of perceived control, perceived surveillance, and perceived data justice on social media on UK residents' intention to cooperate with the police and their digital efficacy?

RQ2b: To what extent are the effects of these factors on intention to cooperate with the police and digital efficacy mediated by perceived social media affordances and self-censorship on social media?

Much of the research on public cooperation with the police focuses on perceptions of procedural justice, legitimacy, trust, and police effectiveness (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Hough et al., 2010; Tankebe, 2013; Bolger & Walters, 2019). This thesis examines public cooperation with the police in relation to perceptions of policing alongside social media-related factors, including perceived control, perceived surveillance, self-censorship, and perceived social media affordances. It situates intention to cooperate with the police within a broader digital context and examines digital efficacy in relation to social media. In this way, the thesis brings together perceptions of policing and perceived digital control mechanisms within a single analytical framework.

The thesis is structured into six chapters. Following the introduction, the second chapter reviews the literature and discusses the main constructs used in the study. It begins with policing in the UK and the role of social media in policing, before examining perceptions and intentions in police–community cooperation, social media affordances, digital efficacy, and the governmentality framework used in the study. The third chapter presents the development of the research models and hypotheses, including Model I on policing perceptions and digitally mediated cooperation, and Model II on digital control mechanisms and police cooperation. The fourth chapter explains the data collection process and analytical methods. It covers the pretest and main survey, sample structure, validity and reliability analyses, and the stages of SEM analysis. The fifth chapter presents the results of the two structural models and discusses the findings in relation to the literature. The final chapter summarises the

overall findings, discusses the study's limitations, and offers recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONSTRUCTS

2.1. Introduction

To examine police–community relations in the UK in the context of social media, this chapter brings together the main concepts used throughout the thesis. It begins with policing in the UK, focusing on jurisdictional differences, public perceptions, and the growing role of digital technologies in policing. It then addresses the role of social media in contemporary policing, examining the opportunities these platforms create for communication and engagement, as well as the challenges they raise regarding visibility, surveillance, and public trust.

The chapter then turns to perceptions of policing and their relationship to public cooperation. In the British context of policing by consent, intention to cooperate is shaped by how people perceive the police, particularly in terms of trust, effectiveness, legitimacy, and procedural justice. As police–community relations are increasingly mediated by digital environments, these perceptions also need to be understood in relation to the conditions created by social media platforms. For this reason, the chapter also discusses social media affordances and digital efficacy as relevant concepts for understanding how individuals experience communication, participation, and the capacity for action in digitally mediated settings.

To interpret these developments more fully, the chapter introduces governmentality as the broader theoretical framework of the thesis. This perspective provides a useful basis for understanding how behaviour may be shaped not only through direct authority, but also through more indirect forms of regulation, such as visibility, surveillance, data collection, and the organisation of possible actions in digital environments. With this in mind, the chapter moves from the policing context and the literature on police–community cooperation to social media affordances and digital efficacy, before developing the broader theoretical discussion of governmentality, policing, algorithms, surveillance, and related constructs.

Throughout the chapter, the term UK police is used as a broad reference to policing institutions across the UK in order to discuss the overall framework of the study. At

the same time, the chapter considers differences across England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland where these are relevant to public perceptions of policing.

2.2. Policing in the United Kingdom: Jurisdictional Differences, Public Perceptions and Digital Transformation

Since policing is organised differently across the UK, public perceptions of the police may not be uniform across England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. These perceptions need to be considered in relation to jurisdictional differences, as trust, confidence, and evaluations of police performance may vary across the UK. Digital transformation is reshaping policing in the UK, making it important to consider regional differences in policing and the changing conditions under which police–community relations are formed and maintained.

Findings from the Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (Campbell et al., 2021) indicated that overall public confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements in Northern Ireland was 80%. Regarding the local police, almost half of the participants surveyed (49%) evaluated the performance of the police officers in their region as excellent or good, a decline from 53% in the 2018/19 period. When asked about overall confidence in local police, 62% of respondents said they had confidence in the police in their area, a decrease from 65% the previous year. According to the Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey (NISCTS), the overall composite measure of public confidence in the police and their accountability arrangements decreased from 86% in 2020/21 to 82% in 2021/22 (Beggs & Gallagher, 2025). The findings for local police show that 55% rated their local police as doing an excellent or good job in 2021/22, a decrease from 62% in 2020/21. When asked about their overall confidence in the local police, 75% of respondents in 2020/21 said they had confidence in the police in their area, and this proportion has decreased in subsequent survey years (Beggs & Gallagher, 2025). Findings from the NISCTS show a gradual decline in public confidence in policing in Northern Ireland. These survey results suggest that people have become less satisfied with the quality of policing services and with the police’s ability to maintain law and order.

Race Disparity Unit (2021) reports that in the year ending March 2020, 74% of people aged 16 and over in England and Wales said they had confidence in their local police. Also, Black Caribbean people had lower confidence in their local police than White British. In the period from April 2017 to March 2020, Black people had lower confidence in local police compared to people from Asian, White, and Other ethnic groups. In the three years leading up to March 2020, white students had a higher level of confidence in local police (83%) than black students (65%) (Race Disparity Unit, 2021).

These findings make it clear that confidence in the police is not evenly distributed across society and can differ between groups. However, because trust is subjective, these figures cannot by themselves explain why these differences exist, and aggregated figures may hide both changes over time and variation within groups. For this reason, these statistics are used here as contextual background.

Recent survey data provide a basis for understanding how the public perceives the police. In the Consultation Overview Report 2024, 71% of respondents across South Wales said they had respect for their local police. 59% found the police friendly and approachable, while 52% believed the police treated people fairly. 52% of respondents said they trusted their local police, while 35% felt that the police were doing a good job in their area (Cardiff Public Services Board, 2024). His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS, 2023a) judged Gwent Police to be adequate in how it treats people fairly and with respect. According to the PEEL assessments (HMICFRS, 2023b), Dyfed-Powys Police has been reported as adequate in using police powers and treating people with fairness and respect. North Wales Police (2024) has been recognised for acquiring the highest level of trust among all police forces in England and Wales. The survey reports that approximately 77% of individuals residing in the area have expressed confidence in how the region is being policed. The Ipsos (2022a) revealed that people in Scotland had a more favourable view of the police, while those in London were the least likely to have a favourable opinion. Recent research reports indicate that levels of trust in police have decreased in England and Wales in recent years (Brown & Hobbs, 2023). According to a YouGov Political Research poll, 51% of Londoners report little or no trust in the Metropolitan

Police; among ethnic minority Londoners, this figure is 55% (Smith, 2023). Figures up to March 2022 indicate that 57% of Londoners believe the Metropolitan Police can be relied upon to be there when needed, down from 59% in the previous quarter (Talora, 2022). Reports clearly show that public perceptions and trust in the police vary across regions and countries. So, this study will also consider potential differences between countries within the UK. These findings highlight the need to reveal potential differences between UK countries.

In Scotland, the public's confidence in the police was only 39% on average from April 2021 to March 2022. However, 63% found the police friendly and approachable, 30% felt they listened to their concerns, and 23% thought the police dealt with local issues (Police Scotland, 2022). In 2021/22, 49% of adults in Scotland said their local police were doing a good job—down from 61% in 2012/13 and 55% in 2019/20. On crime prevention, the figure sits at 46% (Scottish Government, 2023). In 2021/22, individuals residing in the most deprived 15% areas of Scotland expressed less favourable opinions about the police regarding various community engagement and fairness measures (Scottish Government, 2023). The figures suggest that confidence and evaluations of local policing have weakened over time, and that views are less positive in more deprived communities. Also, underline that public confidence is not uniform and varies across communities.

According to the survey, 73% of the respondents considered it crucial or moderately important that Police Scotland communicate with the public through social media. However, only 38% of the respondents reported having seen substantial amounts of information shared on social media by the police. In comparison, 60% had seen not much or no information shared on social media by the police (Scottish Government, 2023). These findings suggest that people value police communication on social media but do not feel they see enough information there. This makes it worth examining how far social media actually supports police–community cooperation.

The Public Perceptions Tracker Summary Report found that 42% of the population views the Metropolitan Police negatively. This figure is the highest level of negativity towards the police since January 2020, when it was 27% (Independent Office for Police Conduct [IOPC], 2023). The level of trust that the police have in London has

decreased significantly over the past few years. Specifically, in the fourth quarter of 2018-19, the police had an 83% trust rate, while in the fourth quarter of 2021-22, their level of trust dropped to 66% (Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime [MOPAC], 2022). Moreover, between 2018 and 2022, confidence in the police among those living in London significantly dropped from 73% to 55% (Duffy et al., 2023). This decline indicates an increasing disconnect between the police and the public in London. These figures show a significant and concerning decrease in public trust and confidence in the Metropolitan Police, indicating a growing gap between police and the people they serve in London.

Only 25% of the respondents in the UK had a positive view of their local police force (Ipsos, 2022a). The survey also found that 29% of respondents believed that their local police were ineffective in preventing violence against women. While many respondents (59%) felt confident that they would be treated fairly by the police, only 34% believed that the police treated all people with respect. The survey further revealed that ethnic minorities had less confidence and trust in the police compared to White people, with 37% of ethnic minorities believing they would be treated fairly by a police officer. The data portrays police services in the UK struggling with fairness, respect, and effectiveness issues in the eyes of the public.

Kimaram et al. (2023) report that 68% of surveyed Britons believe the police have largely stopped trying to solve shoplifting and burglary. In the UK, 67% of people say they have confidence in the police, similar to Spain (66%) and the US (69%). However, this is notably lower than in higher-income countries such as Norway (88%), Germany (86%), Sweden (86%) and Australia (81%) (Duffy et al., 2023). According to the Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Index (2022b), 44% of respondents in Great Britain find the police trustworthy. This rate is lower than people's trust in the police in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, and Sweden.

In the UK, weaker public trust in the police and concerns about police effectiveness may reduce intention to cooperate. This may also reflect broader doubts about the fairness of police conduct and communication with the public. Public expectations of policing are also changing amid digitalisation. The police are expected to be visible online and easily accessible through digital platforms in everyday life. This requires

the police to adapt to digital environments and communicate with the public through digital channels (Association of Police and Crime Commissioners [APCC] & National Police Chiefs' Council [NPCC], 2016). The APCC and NPCC's Policing Vision 2025 includes digital policing. This Policing Vision 2025 includes digital policing, such as making digital contact with the police easier, improving the use of digital intelligence and evidence, and supporting online reporting (APCC & NPCC, 2016). In this context, social media has become part of contemporary policing's engagement with the public.

After 9/11 and the attacks in Madrid and London, the police began to rely much more on big data and predictive systems. In this period, policing shifted towards a more pre-emptive, proactive style (Dencik et al., 2018). In this context, steps have been taken for a digital transformation reform under National Policing Digital Strategy 2020-2030. The Digital Policing Strategy 2020-2030 has been developed for society's benefit within the digital ethics framework. It is underlined that emphasis will be placed on strategies that adopt proactive policing approaches, create departments, and increase police-community interactions to create a reliable and data-based intelligence picture (National Police Chiefs' Council [NPCC], 2020). At the same time, one of its most important goals is to develop a national data ethics governance model to ensure that data is collected, used, and shared ethically to maintain public trust in the police. The principle of policing by consent, which has a place in the UK policing philosophy, becomes even more critical when the ethical challenges posed by digital developments are considered. The power of the police to fulfil their duties depends on the public approval of their existence, actions and behaviour and their ability to provide and maintain public respect (NPCC, 2020).

UK police have been early adopters of social media for surveillance and open-source intelligence (Dencik et al., 2015). Large primary datasets are owned and officially accessible by UK law enforcement. It leverages big data while fulfilling legal responsibilities to protect society, reduce crime and address anti-social behaviour (Stanier, 2016). Although the use of data by the police to ensure the well-being of society has important outputs, the ongoing uncertainty about how the police use social media poses a growing problem in how the data obtained is analysed or interpreted. Social media surveillance encompasses a variety of activities, such as stalking,

watching, and creating panoptic effects within online platforms (Fuchs & Trottier, 2015). For example, in the UK in 2019, the MET police created Project Alpha, which uses a confidential database to gather intelligence via social media. This confidential database records several categories of data and collects public and private data from social media accounts (Dulieu, 2022; Bischoff, 2022). The police have been reported to be carrying out mass surveillance with an alarming lack of transparency. This situation raises concerns that social media users with no links to criminal activity may still be monitored as potential suspects (Bischoff, 2022). UK citizen summits indicate that citizens participating in the summits called for greater transparency and independent oversight of digital surveillance (Dibb et al., 2025). According to an update to Stop and Search and Arrests statistics using 2021 Census estimates, Black people were stopped and searched more frequently in England and Wales than White people (Home Office, 2023). It is possible that discrimination and inequality that exist in real life also happen in digital networks. Since the police rely on data obtained from these networks, it can create or strengthen existing inequalities for individuals. Therefore, it is important to consider individuals' perceptions of data justice and how it impacts their relationship with the police.

While the use of big data reveals elements that threaten society, it also raises concerns about surveillance, accountability, and transparency regarding tracking people's digital footprints (Dencik et al., 2015; Gillespie, 2014). The perception of being watched or having personal data collected can significantly influence the relationship between the police and the community. These concerns highlight the importance of examining how perceptions of surveillance and data collection may affect police–community relations.

Recent reports and studies show that public perceptions of policing in the UK are becoming increasingly negative. However, this perception varies across regions and countries in the UK. Research that considers these regional differences can provide meaningful results. Examining them across regions can identify areas of concern and inform recommendations to address the challenges people face.

The following sections discuss social media in policing and social media and policing in the UK to emphasise the importance of the social media context.

2.3. Social Media in Policing

Social media has become a routine part of how the police and the public communicate and interact. Social media enables the police to inform the public through crime-prevention and safety guidance, request assistance in locating missing persons, educate citizens about police work, and engage more actively with the community (O'Connor, 2017). In this sense, social media has become part of the police's information resource, tracking incidents and monitoring public reactions. By increasing the visibility of everyday activities, social media provides the police with additional opportunities to observe public behaviour (Egawhary, 2019). Social media enables police to communicate with and learn about citizens in real time. Social media allows the police to interact with audiences they would otherwise rarely reach (Denef et al., 2012). Likewise, through social media, individuals can learn more about a situation or event. For example, during the 2011 riots, individuals instantly contacted the Greater Manchester Police on Twitter and received feedback from the police. Denef et al. (2012) show that direct exchanges with citizens via platforms such as Twitter helped the police build a closer relationship with the public. Social media also makes users' shared content more visible and easier to draw on as a source of information (Sæbø et al., 2020), creating further opportunities for coordination around issues of shared concern.

Social media is a platform through which the police seek to fulfil their responsibilities for information provision, interaction and transparency. Its persistence and visibility affordances make police communications and activities more open to public scrutiny and may support citizens' perceptions of accountability and legitimacy (Bergquist et al., 2015). These perceptions of transparency and accountability can foster greater trust in the police and a sense that they act fairly. Police visibility is closely linked to how officers appear to the public and how citizens evaluate police behaviour (Goldsmith, 2010).

Social media has expanded the police's capacity to monitor individuals' activities in digital environments. Persistence is an affordance related to control and monitoring, since information is stored, accessible and searchable in its original form (Bergquist et al., 2015). The expansion of social media use makes individuals more knowable to

others, because their personal information becomes easier to access (Goldsmith, 2015). Social media can have both beneficial and harmful consequences. It enables the police to access more information than they could through street-level encounters and to use it, for example, to identify risks. At the same time, when citizens become aware of such surveillance, they may begin to self-censor their posts and limit the information they share. Intensified monitoring can also reinforce existing inequalities if particular groups are watched more closely than others or if online behaviour is interpreted in a biased way. Posts on social media may also spread beyond a person's control, while their digital traces can be tracked and their data used without clear consent. While the features of social media can be used to monitor users and collect large amounts of personal data, they have also been associated with serious privacy risks and other dark side consequences (Baccarella et al., 2018). The Big Brother Watch (2019) report shows that UK police obtain large volumes of personal data, often unrelated to any specific crime, and describes this as a disproportionate and legally and ethically problematic practice. Consequently, low perceived data justice can have negative implications for police-community cooperation.

2.3.1. Social Media and Policing in the United Kingdom

Jones et al. (1996) suggest that the police are one of the most central public services in a modern state. In many contexts, the police act as representatives of the formal legal system, and this gives them the authority to resolve conflicts and restore order in a variety of ways (Paterson & Williams, 2019). The Police Foundation (2022) defines the core role of the police as promoting public safety by maintaining order and upholding the law, while also carrying out other activities that support this role legitimately and effectively.

Established in 1829, the Metropolitan Police Service is considered the most important and influential police force in the UK and is also one of the oldest police forces in the world (Brown, 2021). Since the creation of the Metropolitan Police in 1829, the office of constable has provided the bedrock of British policing. Although the police service has changed over time, the long-held traditions and core responsibilities associated with the office of constable have remained essentially unchanged (Police Federation of England and Wales [PFEW], 2018). The Peelian principles, which lie at the heart

of British policing, are based on the idea that police authority depends on the approval and cooperation of the public (PFEW, 2018). These principles are closely linked to contemporary discussions of public trust, perceptions of justice and police legitimacy, as well as cooperation between the police and society.

At the heart of the Peelian model of policing is the idea that the police can only carry out their work with the support and cooperation of the public, and that people obey the law and act in socially responsible ways because they believe it is the right thing to do (The Police Foundation, 2022). In the British policing tradition, policing by consent is described as a central concept (Jones et al., 1996). Policing by consent reflects an ongoing commitment to build and sustain the broadest possible public support for policing, while protecting civil order through proportionate force used only to the extent necessary (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary [HMIC], 2011). In this model, the police are expected to build relationships with local communities and work in cooperation with them. For this reason, the present study is situated in the UK, which has a long-standing tradition of community-oriented, consent-based policing. To better understand contemporary relations between the police and society in the UK, it is helpful to outline recent developments that signal important changes in policing.

In 2001, the UK Home Office published a white paper setting out plans to reform the police service in England and Wales (Home Office, 2001). The paper emphasises better use of science and information technology, the strengthening of public confidence, and improved cooperation with communities through more effective partnership working and communication. In parallel, people are spending more of their lives in rapidly expanding digital environments and have access to far more information through social media. It is therefore unsurprising that policing is also moving into these digital spaces, where millions of people are now active. The Police Foundation (2014) argues that the rise of social media is a transformative development for policing, creating new opportunities and challenges that require significant changes in how the police operate. Over the past three decades, efforts to reconnect police organisations with communities, rebuild public confidence and police legitimacy, and address crime and other social problems proactively have led to fundamental changes in the role and function of the police (Paterson & Williams, 2019).

The UK police forces began to gain a foothold on social media in 2008 (The Police Foundation, 2014). Ministry of Defence Police (MDP, 2013) notes that as public use of social networking sites has expanded, police are encouraged to use online and social media channels to improve communication with communities and strengthen transparency and accountability. Police agencies' use of social media can be broadly divided into three areas: information provision, engagement, and intelligence and investigation (The Police Foundation, 2014). Social media allows police to share targeted information quickly and easily. It helps the police to connect and build relationships with local communities and community members. It allows the police to gather intelligence by listening to their communities and by monitoring social media content to build evidence for investigations (The Police Foundation, 2014). During the 2011 riots in England, over a dozen people were arrested for messages they posted on social media that encouraged others to take part in the disorder (Dzieza, 2011). For individuals, social media is a place to get information from the police and contact them, but also a space where they know what they post can be seen and used as evidence.

The next section examines how perceptions of policing relate to public cooperation with the police.

2.4. Understanding Perceptions and Intentions in Police-Community Cooperation

This section clarifies how public perceptions of policing relate to individuals' intention to cooperate with the police. It focuses on four policing perceptions that the literature links to cooperative intentions. The following subsections outline each perception in turn and indicate how it is treated in this study.

2.4.1. Trust in the Police

Trust is the degree to which society believes the police will share their priorities and act competently, reliably, and respectfully (Stoutland, 2001). It also reflects the extent to which people think the police have goodwill towards them and are responsive to the public's needs and concerns (Tyler, 2005). Trust is seen as an essential aspect of social relations, including relations between individuals, groups, or institutions such as the police (Giddens, 1990).

In the policing context, public trust can influence how people perceive police and their intention to cooperate. Distrust in the police hinders the police-society relationship, support for the police and cooperation with the police (Goldsmith, 2005). When trust is absent, the police's ability to maintain public order is diminished (Lim & Kwak, 2022), and social unrest may follow. For instance, Sangnier and Zylberberg (2017) associated protests in African countries with decreased trust in the police. Trust in the police is closely linked to collective efficacy, which is understood as shared cohesion and informal social control (Yesberg & Bradford, 2021). Where the police are regarded as effective and procedurally fair, perceptions of collective efficacy are typically stronger (Sargeant, 2015). Relatedly, perceived collective efficacy itself is positively associated with trust (Nix et al., 2015). Trust is also related to residents' willingness to exercise informal social control (Pabayoy et al., 2020). Overall, trust appears to support collective efficacy and may help sustain broader public cooperation.

Hohl et al. (2010) find that a leaflet-drop in London improved overall confidence, particularly by improving perceptions of police-community engagement, supporting the value of direct police communication. In line with this, Tyler (2005) shows that higher trust in the police is linked to a greater willingness to cooperate. Callanan and Rosenberger (2011) find that watching television news and crime-reality programs is associated with higher confidence in the police. These studies show that communication and media exposure are closely linked to how the public views the police and to their intention to cooperate with them.

The literature on trust in the police shows that trust is fostered by an institutional context and by the police being visible, accessible, and open to communication. Kääriäinen (2008) suggests that high trust in the police in Finland and other Nordic countries reflects broader institutional trust and citizens' experiences of well-functioning government. When the relationship with the police is strengthened through both offline visibility and neighbourhood presence and through communication via websites/social media accounts, citizens' levels of trust tend to be higher (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2015; Ruddell & Jones, 2013; Sindall & Sturgis, 2013). A model of policing that is trustworthy and open to community engagement stands out as one of the police factors that support collective efficacy at the neighbourhood level

(Yesberg & Bradford, 2021). Overall, the literature indicates that trust in the police is associated with institutional performance, procedural fairness and how the police communicate with the public, and that these factors can shape intention to cooperate with the police.

The following section examines perceptions of police effectiveness as another construct of how citizens evaluate the police.

2.4.2. Perceived Police Effectiveness

Effective policing refers to the maintenance of public order and safety. It is linked to the perceived quality of police services and to whether people feel safe enough to go about their daily lives without fear. In this sense, police effectiveness is judged more by the outcomes people perceive and by their level of satisfaction with police services than by process measures alone (Sung, 2006). The use of social media and online complaint systems may enhance police responsiveness and accountability (Odeyemi & Obiyan, 2018). In inspection frameworks, an effective force is defined as one that keeps people safe and reduces crime, and preventing crime, tackling anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe are treated as main areas of effectiveness (HMIC, 2017).

Perceived police effectiveness has been associated with trust in the police in a range of studies (Tankebe, 2008; Wolfe et al., 2016; Boateng, 2018; Nalla & Nam, 2021; Tyler, 2005). Similar findings have been reported in more recent research (Murphy & McPherson, 2022; Lim & Kwak, 2022). However, some studies suggest that fear of crime and police effectiveness have only a limited impact on confidence in the police (Park et al., 2021). Procedural justice is more important than police performance in police-initiated encounters, whereas police performance is more important in citizen-initiated encounters (Murphy, 2009). In contexts of low police legitimacy, public cooperation relies more on perceived police effectiveness (Tankebe, 2009). The literature suggests that perceived police effectiveness can play an important role in shaping trust, confidence, and, in some contexts, public cooperation with the police. The following section focuses on police legitimacy as one of the policing perceptions examined in this study.

2.4.3. Perceived Police Legitimacy

Where authorities act with procedural fairness and respect, people are more likely to view them as legitimate (Kearns et al., 2020). Put simply, legitimacy gives people a reason to follow rules they see as appropriate. When that belief is present, people comply by choice rather than because of force or the threat of punishment (Kearns et al., 2020). Legitimacy itself refers to the internalised belief that authorities deserve obedience (Tyler, 1997).

Legitimacy motivates compliance and cooperation by fostering a felt obligation to obey, which can lead citizens to set aside self-interested considerations (Tyler et al., 2015). Perceiving the police as legitimate is associated with a greater willingness to engage in prosocial behaviour, including reporting crimes and taking part in community safety initiatives (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Building this sense of legitimacy, Tyler (2007) suggests, relies on process-based practices that include explaining decisions, giving people an opportunity to be heard, and treating people with respect. These strategies can be readily implemented through social media, which allows two-way communication and greater transparency. Social media can help build legitimacy and procedural justice by opening channels for dialogue and participation between government and the public (Mossberger et al., 2013; Oliveira & Welch, 2013). In policing, legitimacy is shaped mainly by procedural justice, specifically by how officers use their authority, rather than by perceived effectiveness in fighting crime (Tyler, 2004). Social media offers an area in which these perceptions develop. It enables individuals to identify, discuss and respond to perceived injustices. Through commenting, sharing experiences and interacting with law enforcement online, citizens can influence public trust in, and perceptions of, police legitimacy (Walsh & O'Connor, 2019; Bullock, 2018).

Creating content about the police on social media or sharing their own experiences about the police is related to the construction of police legitimacy (Ralph, 2022). Recognising this potential, police organisations have increasingly invested in social media to engage with communities (Crump, 2011; Ralph, 2022). Social media enables the police to promote and distribute their own narratives by bypassing traditional

media's gatekeeping, allowing more direct communication with the public (Nhan & Noakes, 2020).

According to Ralph (2022), police legitimacy on social media takes shape through ongoing interaction with citizens. In this process, police seek to project legitimacy through both formal and informal communication styles, while citizens evaluate these claims in light of their prior attitudes and face-to-face experiences with the police. When legitimacy is challenged online, police officers and staff attempt to reconstruct and, at times, reassert it. Overall, the study suggests that police legitimacy on social media is not fixed but is continuously negotiated and maintained over time.

Nhan and Noakes (2020) argue that social media may enhance police legitimacy by enabling police to shape their own narratives, support community policing efforts, and present officers as more human and approachable. On social media, formal police posts may provoke resistance, whereas more conversational ones are often received more positively by the public (e.g., Ralph, 2022; Wood & McGovern, 2021). Although social media contributes to the reproduction of police legitimacy, the power it provides to the government (e.g. surveillance, data collection) can potentially undermine trust in the police and, thus, legitimacy (Nhan & Noakes, 2020). These privacy concerns may also encourage self-censorship, as social media users often limit what they share to avoid conflict or identity-threatening situations (Lampinen et al., 2009).

Ruddell and Jones (2013) found that users of police social media reported higher confidence in, and satisfaction with, the police than non-users. Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer (2015) report that informative police use of Twitter can modestly strengthen perceived police legitimacy, mainly through perceptions of police effectiveness and only among a small group of interested followers. Their study indicated that establishing direct communication channels and using them to share information contributes to strengthening perceptions of police legitimacy. However, since the number of users following official police Twitter accounts was significantly lower at the time of the study compared to today, the findings were based on a relatively limited sample. Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) argue that police make ongoing claims to legitimacy and respond to audience reactions in order to sustain that legitimacy over time.

Online exposure to negative police stories is linked to lower perceived legitimacy (Intravia et al., 2020). According to Intravia et al. (2018), people who read news online tended to report less favourable attitudes toward police legitimacy. Social media use showed only a weak positive association after controlling for other factors. Their findings point to the role of digital media in shaping perceptions of police legitimacy. Perceived police legitimacy influences how individuals evaluate police authority and whether they are willing to cooperate with the police, including in digital settings.

2.4.4. Perceived Procedural Justice

One antecedent of police–community cooperation is procedural justice. Procedural justice refers to perceptions of fairness, respect and impartiality in police–community interactions, including the quality of police decision-making and interpersonal treatment (Tyler, 2006). Procedural justice concerns how people judge whether the police exercise their authority fairly and deliver services in a just way (Tyler & Fagan, 2008). When people are treated fairly and with respect, they are likely to see the police as legitimate and to cooperate (Tyler & Fagan, 2008). In such contexts, responsibility for following rules rests less on fear of punishment and more on people’s own sense that they ought to comply, which helps to sustain social order (Tyler, 2006).

This process is defined as the process-based model of regulation (Tyler & Huo, 2002; Tyler, 2006). According to Tyler (2003, 2006), procedural justice strengthens legitimacy, and legitimacy encourages public cooperation with the police. Fair procedures can mobilise shared social values that support law-abiding behaviour. Procedural justice is considered important for police effectiveness, for identifying offenders, and for the public’s willingness to cooperate in combating crime (Tyler, 2003). Fair and respectful treatment by the police makes individuals less likely to challenge officers and more likely to cooperate in maintaining public order and safety (Anrango Narváez et al., 2023).

Many studies find that when people think the police use fair procedures, they are willing to cooperate with the police. Reisig and Lloyd (2009), for instance, found a direct and positive relationship between perceived procedural justice and willingness to cooperate with the police. Other studies show that when people view the police as

procedurally fair, they see the police as more legitimate and report greater willingness to cooperate (Kochel et al., 2013; Tyler et al., 2010; Kochel, 2018; Tyler & Fagan, 2008). In a counterterrorism context, Tyler et al. (2010) find that perceptions of procedural justice are more strongly associated with police legitimacy and public cooperation than instrumental factors. Kochel et al. (2013) found that victims who viewed the police as procedurally fair and legitimate were more likely to report their victimisation. In environments with high crime rates, procedural justice remains an important foundation for legitimacy (Kochel, 2018). Using panel data from one-year interviews, Tyler and Fagan (2008) indicated that positively perceived procedural justice during a personal experience increases legitimacy. Accordingly, the authors argue that this provides a useful framework for understanding how perceived procedural justice relates to both police legitimacy and cooperation. Procedural justice is a central factor in shaping people's reactions and behaviour to their experiences with the police. Sunshine and Tyler (2003) demonstrated that procedural justice is a foundational element of legitimacy. Similarly, Graham et al. (2020) found that increased perceptions of procedural justice led to higher intentions to report both traditional and cybercrime victimisation. Mazerolle et al. (2013) report that procedurally just traffic stops increase drivers' perceptions of procedural justice.

Across six months of routine traffic stops with interviews immediately afterwards, Terpstra and van Wijck (2023) did not find that procedurally fair officer behaviour led to higher perceptions of procedural justice. Women were less likely to report sexual assault when they felt the treatment was unfair (Stanek et al., 2023). How people are treated in encounters also reflects on their cooperation. Fair and respectful policing appears to increase perceived legitimacy and willingness to cooperate (Anrango Narváez et al., 2023).

Geoghan (2022) finds that those exposed to a procedurally unjust police interaction were more likely to share the content than those in the procedurally just condition. Boateng and Chenane (2020) suggest that social media has become a routine communication tool for police agencies, enabling them to share information with the public and shape their public image. Social media is more than just a space where the police transmit information in a one-way manner. It has become an environment where

people evaluate police behaviour, comment on encounters they find fair or unfair, and share these experiences with others. For this reason, procedural justice is important for understanding individuals' intention to cooperate with the police.

2.4.5. Intention to Cooperate with the Police

Police–community cooperation refers to any action taken by the public to help the police secure public safety as a common good (Brantingham & Uchida, 2021). The public's willingness to support the police in crime prevention and response ensures the effective implementation of police strategies (Li et al., 2021). In democratic societies, police authority is based on public consent. Murphy et al. (2008) argue that public consent makes it easier for the police to maintain trust and secure cooperation. In the UK, the philosophy of policing is rooted in the principle of consensual policing, whereby police power is derived from the common consent of the people rather than from the coercive authority of the state. For this reason, its principles constantly emphasise police-society cooperation (Home Office, 2012). Securing voluntary citizen cooperation is an important condition for maintaining public approval of the police and encouraging compliance with the law (Home Office, 2012).

Studies commonly examine cooperation as an outcome, including whether people report crimes, share information, and support local initiatives. A wide range of studies shows that when people see the police as procedurally fair and legitimate, they report a higher willingness to cooperate with the police (Tyler, 1990; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2004, 2006; Murphy et al., 2008; Reisig & Lloyd, 2009; Murphy & Barkworth, 2014; Tyler & Jackson, 2014; Bradford & Jackson, 2016; Metcalfe et al., 2016; Pehrson et al., 2017; Murphy et al., 2022; Kyprianides et al., 2021). At the same time, there are context-specific variations. Li et al. (2021) report that perceptions of police fairness had no significant total effect on willingness to cooperate. Similarly, Nix (2017) found that U.S. police executives tend to see police performance as more important than procedural justice for generating public cooperation. In Tankebe's (2009) study, only perceived police effectiveness, not legitimacy, predicted public cooperation with the police. Murphy et al. (2015) also showed that procedural justice, police performance, and social identity significantly influenced cooperation intentions.

Reisig et al. (2012) found that, among the dimensions of legitimacy, only trust in the police significantly predicted young people's willingness to cooperate with the police.

Communication is at the centre of relations between the police and society. Social media is often recognised as an effective tool for police–community interaction (Heverin & Zach, 2010; Crump, 2011). Existing research has paid relatively limited attention to how media and social media shape police–community relations and cooperation (Dirikx & Van den Bulck, 2014; Heverin & Zach, 2010; Crump, 2011). Dirikx and Van den Bulck (2014) analysed how adolescents' exposure to crime shows is associated with their intentions to cooperate with the police. Aside from intentions, task-specific studies indicate that social/digital media can mobilise cooperation. For missing persons with dementia, original tweets that included a photo and tweets posted by police departments were associated with higher odds of recovery within a month (Tsoi et al., 2018). Jeanis et al. (2024) found that boosted missing-person appeals attracted more engagement, and only boosted posts in their sample were associated with a recovery. Digital media has become an important factor in police–community relations and cooperation, but this area has received little empirical attention so far.

To better understand cooperation in digitally mediated environments, it is also necessary to consider the affordances of social media platforms.

2.5. Social Media Affordances

Gibson (2015) argues that perception is a direct process based on the information available in the environment, and that individuals primarily perceive the affordances of objects rather than their physical attributes. Affordance is mainly used in communication technology literature as qualities, features, or cues within a technology (Nagy & Neff, 2015). Initially defined as the action possibilities that the environment offers to an organism, affordance (Gibson, 2015) has since been extended to explain how individuals interact with digital environments. An affordance perspective suggests that the action possibilities offered by an object or technology are shaped not only by its properties but also by the relationship and context established with the user. This relationship determines possible or limited behaviours (Faraj & Azad, 2012). Earl

and Kimport (2011, p. 32) define affordances as “the actions and uses that a technology makes qualitatively easier or possible when compared to prior like technologies.”

Leonardi (2011) argues that affordances arise through direct interaction with technologies and shape how people work with them. Affordances are possibilities for action that the environment provides to a person, relative to their capabilities (Gibson, 2014). Therefore, an affordance perspective helps explain how social media are perceived and used in practice (Leonardi & Vaast, 2017; Kim & Ellison, 2022; Treem & Leonardi, 2013). Nagy and Neff (2015) further extend this work by emphasising imagined affordances and proposing a framework that integrates the material, mediated and affective dimensions of human–technology interaction. They argue that what really matters is less the formal claims about what technologies can do and more how people, in practice, imagine what a tool is for. According to Nagy and Neff (2015), imagined affordances emerge between what users perceive and expect, the material and functional properties of technologies, and the intentions designers build into those technologies.

Today, information, opinions, and ideas spread very quickly. In this environment, police work increasingly depends on people who use technology actively and follow what is happening around them. When the police are present on social media, where many people now spend a large part of their day, this shows a move away from traditional ways of communicating with the public. In this context, social media changes how the police and the public relate to each other. Social media platforms provide environments where individuals can build networks and exchange ideas around shared interests and everyday issues (Lin, 2022). It also helps people feel part of a group and take an active role in community life. Instead of remaining silent listeners or viewers, users become active participants through the mutual interaction these platforms enable. When the police use such platforms that allow two-way communication, it reflects a growing awareness that genuine, ongoing engagement with the community matters.

This two-way interaction has the potential to enhance police–community relations. During the 2011 UK riots, the police used social media to track suspects and asked citizens to identify rioters in photos posted online (Dzieza, 2011). Numerous studies

have examined the role of the police in the context of social media. Although these studies differ in terms of platforms, practices, and sample populations, much of the existing research has focused on identifying the purposes behind police use of social media, such as information dissemination, data collection, public cooperation, and surveillance (e.g., Crump, 2011; Boateng & Chenane, 2020; Egawhary, 2019; Dai et al., 2017; Peters & Ojedokun, 2019; Heverin & Zach, 2010). Given that communication on social media is co-constructed by both the police and the public, this study centres on users' perceptions of social media affordances.

Social media has become an important space for both the public and the police because its affordances foster fluid, interactive communication. These affordances may shape how users engage with the police and how they manage their expression.

The following section explores four social media affordances examined in this study: interaction, visibility, persistence, and association.

2.5.1. Interaction

Social media offers the police an unprecedented opportunity for direct public interaction. In this study, interaction refers to the affordance that social media platforms offer users to communicate directly and instantly with others or with content (Long, 2020). Perceived interactivity captures such real-time exchanges through dimensions such as connectedness and responsiveness (Zhao & Lu, 2012). In traditional media, communication between the police and the public was largely one-way, with police departments broadcasting information through television, radio, or print and leaving little room for citizens' immediate feedback. Departing from this one-way communication, social media forms an interactive space in which the police and individuals are simultaneously visible, and where questions, criticisms, and messages of support can receive responses in real time.

Almukhaylid et al. (2021) identify interaction as one of the most important social affordances in studies of virtual communities, where it supports problem-solving and learning. Similarly, Khan et al. (2019) describe social media interactivity as enabling employees in public organisations to exchange different forms of content, receive prompt replies during working hours, and communicate efficiently. Patrick and Rollins

(2022), however, suggest that this interactive potential often remains unrealised in practice, as agencies frequently ignore or rarely respond to citizens' inquiries. This suggests a gap between interaction as a technological possibility and interaction in practice. In many cases, citizens' concerns receive little response.

2.5.2. Persistence

Persistence refers to the enduring availability of content on social media platforms (Treem & Leonardi, 2013; Vaast & Kaganer, 2013). Content that is uploaded to online platforms can be stored, reshared, and remain accessible for an indefinite period of time (Vaast & Kaganer, 2013).

Persistence means that posts remain available beyond the moment they are made. When previously shared content remains searchable and accessible, users can return to previous posts and reuse that information (Sun et al., 2020). Kim and Ellison (2022) make a similar point, showing that social media content stays available after it is posted.

The police need to think carefully about how they present themselves and their work on social media. Posts that remain visible for a long time can gradually influence how the public evaluates the police. People can return to these posts, recall and compare what has been said or done, and, where necessary, hold public officials to account; even in contentious situations, this process can support perceptions of legitimacy (Bergquist et al., 2015). The persistence of social media content may lead individuals to encounter posts about the police repeatedly, which can indirectly shape their intentions to cooperate with the police.

2.5.3. Association

Association refers to social media's capacity to create and sustain connections between users and between users and content (Treem & Leonardi, 2013). It is identified as one of four core social media affordances together with visibility, persistence and editability (Vaast & Kaganer, 2013). Platform design shapes how these connections form. On Facebook, ties are usually mutual friend relationships, while on Twitter and Instagram, one person can follow another without being followed back (Halpern et al.,

2017; Kim & Ellison, 2022). Beyond user-to-user ties, social media platforms also enable connections between users and content through features such as tags, likes, and comments, thereby making user-content associations explicit (Treem & Leonardi, 2013; Kim & Ellison, 2022).

Social media platforms make it easier for users to connect with other people and to encounter relevant content. They also often recommend profiles or information based on previous activity and profile details (Pee, 2018). This affordance also creates opportunities for police organisations to engage with the public and to enhance visibility and communication on social platforms (Bergquist et al., 2015). Overall, this literature suggests that association connects users with police-related content on social media and may shape how they evaluate and respond to the police.

2.5.4. Visibility

Visibility refers to the extent to which information shared online is publicly or privately accessible to others (Fox & Moreland, 2015). Advances in communication technologies have increased the visibility of information through databases and search tools that make content easily retrievable by end users. Visibility extends beyond organisational settings to social technologies, where information visibility may assist users in making and maintaining connections and sharing information with their networks (Evans et al., 2017). Social media also allows individuals to make themselves visible to others in the digital environment (Ellison & Boyd, 2013).

Visibility allows others to view users' content without the users being aware of it. Facebook enables users to look at others' profiles without notifying the profile owner, allowing them to monitor content without being seen (Fox & Moreland, 2015). Although this invisible viewing makes it easier for others to monitor users, it may also prompt users to self-censor. Users may filter their content before posting or refrain from posting altogether in order to manage their digital presence.

Social media technologies increase the visibility of behaviours, information and interactions that were previously difficult to observe, making them more accessible to organisations and other observers (Treem & Leonardi, 2013). For the police, this means that both their communication and the public's reactions are easier to follow,

monitor, and use as a basis for engagement. As police behaviour and public reactions become visible on social media, visibility may shape how policing is evaluated and whether individuals are willing to cooperate with the police. More broadly, social media affordances help explain the conditions under which people communicate, respond to one another, and develop a sense of shared capacity for action in digital environments. This leads to the discussion of digital efficacy in the following section.

2.6. Digital Efficacy

In the literature, efficacy has been conceptualised in several forms, most notably self-efficacy, political efficacy, and collective efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs in their capacity to organise and execute the actions required to manage situations effectively (Bandura, 1977; Luszczynska et al., 2005). Political efficacy, in turn, concerns beliefs about one's ability to understand and participate effectively in politics as well as perceptions of the responsiveness of political institutions (Craig & Maggionto, 1982). In contrast, collective efficacy refers to shared beliefs about the capacity to act together towards common goals.

Bandura (1997) defines collective efficacy as a shared belief within a group in its capability to organise and execute the actions required to achieve desired outcomes. As a group-level concept, it focuses on people's shared capacity to act together. In policing contexts, where public attitudes and engagement are closely tied to trust, legitimacy, and shared responsibility within communities, collective efficacy offers a useful way of understanding how shared capacities for action may develop. Research in high-crime hot spots, for example, suggests that certain policing strategies can strengthen collective efficacy and increase residents' willingness to cooperate with the police over time (Kochel et al., 2016).

Collective efficacy has traditionally been conceptualised in neighbourhood contexts through social cohesion, mutual trust, and a willingness to intervene for the common good (Sampson et al., 1997). However, the processes through which people gather around shared concerns and interact with one another are no longer confined to physically bounded communities. Digital environments also create social spaces where individuals interact over time through conversation, information exchange, and

resource sharing (Resnick & Kraut, 2012). As networked publics, these environments bring people together for social, cultural, and civic purposes, reshaping how participation is organised through networked technologies (boyd, 2010). This suggests that collective efficacy can also be considered in relation to digital settings.

In digital environments, the perception of being able to act together with others is not shaped only by beliefs in individual efficacy. Access to information, finding support, and coordinating with others take place through social ties and communication. Social networks affect access to social capital resources and to the benefits that arise from different types of ties (Wellman et al., 2001; Williams, 2006). Digital efficacy can also be regarded as a capacity that develops through relationships established with others. It refers to whether individuals feel able to stay connected with others and make use of the resources available in digital environments. Studies on social networking sites suggest that these platforms can help people share information, maintain relationships, and stay connected (Ellison et al., 2007; Ellison et al., 2014). Haythornthwaite (2002) also argues that new media can sustain contact, activate latent ties, and widen access to information.

In this study, digital efficacy refers to individuals' perceived capacity to communicate, coordinate, and act with others in digital environments around shared concerns or goals. In this respect, it differs from self-efficacy, which refers to beliefs about one's capability to exercise control over one's own functioning and to carry out actions (Bandura, 1997), and from internal political efficacy, which refers to beliefs about one's own competence to understand and participate effectively in politics (Niemi et al., 1991). In digital environments, affordances such as interaction, visibility, and association may shape how people understand their capacity to act with others online.

Within this framework, digital efficacy is treated in this study as an outcome shaped by how individuals experience social media environments. Greater perceived control on social media may strengthen individuals' sense that they can share information, connect with others, and engage in collective interaction online. Perceived surveillance, by contrast, may make such action feel exposed or constrained (Stoycheff, 2016), which can alter how individuals understand their capacity to participate in digital settings. Social media affordances may affect how users connect

with others, encounter shared concerns, and sustain collective engagement online. From this perspective, digital efficacy draws attention to how digital environments shape people's perceived capacity to act with others.

2.7. Foucault's Governmentality

Foucault uses the concept of governmentality to explain how conduct is shaped and directed within modern forms of rule (Foucault, 2007). Rather than limiting government to the formal authority of the state, he uses the term in a broader sense to refer to the ways behaviour is organised through particular techniques, rationalities, and relations of power (Foucault, 1982; Gordon, 1991). In this sense, government is understood as the conduct of conduct, that is, the attempt to structure the possible field of action of individuals and populations (Foucault, 1982; Foucault, 2007).

Foucault (1982) conceptualises power not as a possession but as a set of relations through which conduct is shaped and directed. Governmentality, in this respect, provides a framework for analysing how these power relations are exercised in the governance and regulation of individuals and populations. It draws attention to the rationalities, techniques, and practices through which conduct is organised and collective life is managed. Building on this perspective, Rose and Miller (1992) treat governmentality as a way of analysing the political rationalities through which contemporary societies are governed.

Foucault's concept of governmentality draws attention to a form of governing that is concerned with both the management of populations and the conduct of individuals, particularly in relation to the tension between individual freedom and collective welfare (McKinlay et al., 2012). He relates this to the governmentalization of the state, in which state power relies on administrative, calculative practices to regulate individuals and groups (Henman, 2011). The growth of administrative knowledge, including data on censuses, mortality, education, and productivity, became important for evaluating the effectiveness of governmental intervention (McKinlay et al., 2012). Foucault links the emergence of governmentality to sixteenth-century debates on reason of state, where attention moved from territory to population, especially its wealth and health (Henman, 2011). From this perspective, population is understood as

a domain characterised by its own processes and regularities, which can be observed, measured, and managed (Foucault, 2007). In this sense, the population becomes a central target of government as well as an important object of governmental knowledge. It is approached as an object of observation through which knowledge is produced for intervention (Foucault & Faubion, 2000).

Within this framework, police in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries referred to a broad set of regulatory practices concerned with order, welfare, and the management of collective life (Foucault, 2007). At the same time, the growing use of statistics signalled an increasing concern with the population as an object of calculation and intervention (Henman, 2011). Governmentality does not displace sovereignty or discipline. It works through them by reorganising their rationalities, techniques, and institutions (Foucault, 2007). Governing, in this sense, is concerned less with the defence of territory alone than with the regulation of circulation, including the movement of people, goods, and information, together with the risks these movements may generate. The emphasis shifts towards the management of population-level processes and the anticipation of future uncertainties (Foucault, 2007).

Foucault (2008) indicates that the management of population gives rise to new forms of knowledge about collective life. Population becomes a field that can be observed, measured, and regulated through political calculation. Individuals are addressed as part of this wider population and become knowable through forms of observation, classification, and intervention. Governmentality, therefore, works through the regulation of population and through forms of knowledge that make individuals governable. In this sense, the individual appears both as an object of government and as a subject of self-government (Foucault, 2008).

Foucault distinguishes apparatuses of security from sovereignty and discipline by showing that they operate in different ways. Discipline is centripetal because it closes off and organises a specific space within which it can operate. Security works through an open field of intervention. It deals with a series of possible events, allows circulation, and adapts intervention to flows, probabilities, and broader social and economic processes (Foucault, 2007). Its concern is to regulate circulation in response to risks arising from these moving processes.

Governmentality can be understood as a form of rationality in which the population becomes a central target of regulation and the conduct of individuals and groups is directed (Lawlor & Nale, 2014). It draws on forms of knowledge such as political economy and relies on apparatuses of security as one of its key mechanisms (Lawlor & Nale, 2014). Cruikshank (1999) argues that governance reaches into work, welfare, economic life while encouraging individuals to regulate themselves through seemingly voluntary forms of self-management. Power works by shaping the possible field of action and does not always depend on constant visible intervention. In this way, individuals are encouraged to govern themselves through norms and practices of self-government (Foucault, 1982).

The concept of governmentality brings together the practices of governing and the rationalities that render such governance possible. In this context, governance is not limited to the formal behaviour of institutions; it also includes the discursive frameworks through which particular objects and subjects of governance are constructed and made meaningful (Joseph, 2010). Governmentality works through notions of rights and freedoms to define what it means to be a citizen, encouraging individuals to internalise these ideals and regulate their conduct accordingly. This strategy of governing allows the state to manage at a distance and places some responsibility on the individual (van Wyk & Reddy, 2022). Governmentality's indirect logic of directing individuals' behaviour becomes particularly visible in the maintenance of public order and the institutionalisation of surveillance. According to Foucault (2007), one of the key institutions for understanding power within the framework of governmentality is the police. As Imbong (2022) notes, police power functions as an element of the state and as a concrete mode of execution through which governmental rationalities are reinforced. Given this role, the following section focuses on how the police contribute to the management of public behaviour.

2.8. Police and Management of the Behaviour of the Public

Drawing on Foucault, Sayão et al. (2025) argue that the police should not be understood only as a body that maintains order. They also describe the police as a mechanism concerned with the health, safety, and welfare of the population. Foucault (2007) traces this change to the eighteenth century, when population became a central

concern of government and new forms of knowledge and security were developed to manage it. From this perspective, the police are involved in managing conduct at the level of the population.

According to Foucault (2007), in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, police did not refer simply to the modern institution of law enforcement but to a broad governmental domain concerned with the effective use of the state's forces. Within this framework, the objects of police included the number of inhabitants, the necessities of life, health, occupations, as well as the circulation and coexistence of people. Foucault suggests that earlier meanings of the term were broader and linked to the regulation of public order under authority, whereas by the seventeenth century police had come to signify a set of techniques for strengthening the state while preserving order and splendour. In this context, Turquet de Mayerne described police as that which gives the city its ornament, form, and splendour, while Hohenthal later defined it as the means serving the splendour of the state and the external happiness of citizens (Foucault, 2007).

Foucault (2007) argues that the police had aims that extended far beyond the enforcement of the law. The management of the population was one of its central concerns. This involved considering the population in relation to the state's forces and its capacity to strengthen the state. Another task of the police was the regulation of occupations, ensuring that necessary forms of work were carried out in ways that supported the state. The police were also concerned with the coexistence and circulation of people, together with the conditions that enabled such circulation. In this sense, the police functioned as an administrative mechanism for organising the social and economic conditions necessary for the well-being and strength of the state. As Marinković and Ristić (2019) note, this suggests that the police should be understood as part of a broader governing mechanism concerned with security, the regulation of life, and the management of the population.

By the eighteenth century, the police were increasingly understood as a broad administrative apparatus concerned with regulating population, health, labour, and social order. It operated as a key mechanism for the supervision and management of collective life and public well-being (Dodsworth, 2008; Raeff, 1983). In relation to

this wider concern with population, Foucault (2014b) describes hygiene as a regime concerned with the health of populations, involving medical surveillance of urban space and intervention in sites considered especially dangerous, including prisons, ships, port facilities, and hospitals. This meant that governing populations increasingly relied on close observation, routine oversight, and intervention in matters affecting public health and welfare.

Laval (2012) suggests that surveillance is no longer limited to specific institutions or direct supervision. It extends into everyday life and works through dispersed forms of observation. In this way, the management of conduct reaches beyond enclosed settings and becomes tied to broader processes of monitoring and regulation. Concerns with order and control continue under contemporary conditions, although in different forms. This development helps explain why contemporary governance is linked to data, tracking, and algorithmic systems.

As technologies expand, policing becomes organised around security and the use of information. Bauman (1998) suggests that, under conditions of globalisation, state governments are increasingly reduced to security functions and may come to resemble oversized police precincts. This security orientation also depends on forms of knowledge, expertise, and calculation through which problems are identified, measured, and acted upon. Dean (2010) argues that governing works through such practices, together with the technical means that make them operational. In contemporary settings, digital systems intensify these calculative practices through greater speed, scalability, wider reach across populations. Rouvroy (2013) conceptualises this emerging form of rule as algorithmic governmentality.

2.9. Algorithms as Instruments of Power

Algorithms are dynamic technical processes designed and implemented by people within broader political, social, and cultural environments (Willson, 2019). In a broad sense, algorithms can be understood as encoded procedures that take input data and produce outputs through specified calculations (Gillespie, 2014). Algorithms do not operate in isolation. They work through their connections with broader systems. Their significance lies in how they shape the organisation, visibility, and use of information.

This points to a social order in which power is increasingly concentrated in algorithms. Diakopoulos (2015) argues that they exercise power through processes such as classification, association, and filtering.

Computer scientists often interpret algorithms as rules (Lash, 2007). Lash (2007) argues that algorithms are not conventional rules but generative rules that produce outcomes and increasingly permeate social and cultural life. In this sense, algorithms shape the production of content and the exercise of power in everyday settings. This points to a social order in which power is increasingly located in the algorithm. Goffey (2008) treats algorithms as more than formal or theoretical abstractions. As part of software, they have a real existence and produce material effects on end users. This perspective redirects attention from algorithms as neutral technical procedures to their role in organising social processes, shaping the conditions of action in everyday life.

Understanding how algorithms operate and shape society requires attention to their dependence on data. Data capture aspects of the world in abstract and machine-readable forms, including text, images, videos, sounds, and their combinations (Che et al., 2013). In this way, data becomes a resource through which governments, organisations, as well as other actors interpret social processes to inform action (Kitchin, 2014). Once processed, complex data can support interpretation, inform decision-making, generate knowledge (Che et al., 2013). Data thus contributes to knowledge production and informs governance.

Algorithms are socially constructed and institutionally managed mechanisms (Gillespie, 2014). In this sense, they operate as a knowledge logic through which relevance is assessed and public information is organised. Data have also become an important resource for governing public services and managing social life (Kitchin, 2014). Ananny (2016) conceptualises networked information algorithms as assemblages of institutionally situated code, practices, and norms, shifting attention away from purely mathematical understandings of algorithms towards the relations through which they operate. Diakopoulos (2015) argues that algorithms should be examined because they exercise power through processes such as prioritising, classifying, associating, and filtering information. For Neyland (2016), algorithms should not be imagined as entities that operate on their own or remain beyond scrutiny.

Gillespie (2014) likewise shows that they are shaped by human decisions and institutional settings. From this perspective, algorithmic culture emerges as computational processes increasingly take over decisions about how people, places, objects, and ideas are sorted, classified, and ranked (Striphas, 2015). Algorithms permeate nearly every aspect of daily life, from mundane routines to critical decisions operating silently in the background. They influence not only what individuals see, value, or prioritise but also how broader realities are shaped and organised. These often invisible processes shift attention from technical design toward the concept of algorithmic culture (Slack & Hristova, 2020). Striphas (2015) describes algorithmic culture as the incorporation of human thought, conduct, organisation and expression into the logic of big data and large-scale computation.

Algorithms are embedded in everyday life, from routine activities to background processes connected to important decisions. They influence what individuals see, value, or prioritise, while affecting how social reality is organised. These developments have prompted scholars to move beyond technical design in discussions of algorithmic culture (Slack & Hristova, 2020). For Striphas (2015), algorithmic culture refers to the growing incorporation of human thought, conduct, organisation, and expression into the logic of large-scale computation driven by big data.

Algorithms are often presented in public discourse as opaque systems. Yet they make some information more visible than others, which affects how content circulates (Gillespie, 2014). Seaver (2017) makes a similar point by treating algorithms as sociotechnical systems that are continuously formed through the work of people and institutions. Striphas (2015) places this development within a broader account of algorithmic culture, where processes of classification and evaluation increasingly organise cultural life. Gillespie (2014) illustrates this point through Facebook's News Feed and Twitter's trending calculations, showing how algorithms direct online attention and influence what becomes publicly visible.

Algorithms are increasingly viewed as computational structures embedded in a particular vision of society, shaped by diverse interests and purposes. Rather than existing outside social processes, algorithms are produced within specific social contexts and become integrated into them (Beer, 2017). Goffey (2008) argues that

algorithms have material effects as they are realised in software. They mediate relations between human and non-human actors. In this sense, they do not function as neutral codes (Seyfert & Roberge, 2016). Sheehy (2019) conceptualises algorithmic power as a form of governmentality exercised through algorithmic systems. These perspectives suggest that algorithms function as technical systems involved in organising social life.

Seen in this way, algorithmic governmentality provides a useful framework for understanding how algorithms operate through data, profiling, prediction, and adjustment.

2.10. Algorithmic Governmentality

Algorithmic governmentality refers to a mode of governance grounded in the algorithmic processing of large-scale datasets rather than in politics, law, or social norms (Rouvroy, 2020). It describes a form of rationality that seeks to anticipate and pre-emptively influence possible behaviours by producing profiles and correlations from data (Rouvroy & Berns, 2013). In this sense, it relies on digital traces to model behavioural tendencies and manage uncertainty (Rouvroy, 2013).

Rouvroy (2013) describes algorithmic governmentality as a three-stage process moving from mass data collection to computational processing and predictive inference. This framework can be read alongside Foucault's account of governmentality, in which knowledge of the population served to understand public welfare and assess governmental effectiveness (McKinlay et al., 2012).

Algorithmic governmentality operates by generating predictions from vast datasets and adapting informational and physical environments accordingly (Rouvroy, 2013). Individuals are increasingly governed not through physical presence alone, but through digital profiles constructed from the traces they leave in everyday life (Rouvroy & Berns, 2013). In this process, governance relies less on personal intentions or psychological motivations than on statistical associations drawn from apparently insignificant traces of data (Rouvroy, 2013). This points to an algorithmically mediated, data-driven mode of influence.

Algorithmic power shapes behaviour without fully determining human conduct. Foucault (2014a) approaches government as a way of shaping the possible field of action of others. From a similar perspective, Rouvroy and Berns (2013) argue that algorithmic governmentality works through anticipation, profiling, and the arrangement of environments. People still retain scope to act, but the conditions in which action unfolds are increasingly organised in advance. Instead of punishing behaviour after the event, this mode of power seeks to manage uncertainty beforehand by directing attention and adjusting environments so that some outcomes become more likely than others (Rouvroy, 2020). In this way, algorithmic systems make communication visible and form part of the wider arrangements through which power is exercised (Cobbe, 2021).

As authorities make greater use of digital traces, social media content, and other kinds of data, the observation, classification, and prediction of behaviour become prominent in governance. Pop Stefanija and Pierson (2023) argue that this form of power is exercised through calculative, data-driven devices, including algorithmic systems.

Building on Katzenbach and Ulbricht's (2019) concept of algorithmic governance, algorithmic governmentality can be understood as a form of social ordering based on rules, coordination between actors, and complex computer-based procedures. In this context, the notion of algorithmic patrol presents predictive policing as a prominent method of policing (Završnik, 2021). As a security apparatus, the police reinforce state power through the regulation of populations and the management of risk (Foucault, 2007). In the UK, law enforcement agencies have formal access to major data systems, which they use in carrying out legal responsibilities such as safeguarding communities, reducing crime, and addressing anti-social behaviour (Stanier, 2016). Social media content is also monitored in efforts to anticipate potential criminal activity (Trottier, 2012). In predictive policing, big data analytics are used to forecast where, when, and what kinds of crimes are likely to occur. Rather than relying on causal explanation, these predictions are based on statistical correlations (Just & Latzer, 2017). In this respect, predictive policing reflects a data-driven approach to governance. Foucault described security apparatuses in relation to the regulation of circulation (Terranova, 2015). The police, by contrast, were historically anchored in the city as a central space

of order (Neocleous, 2015). However, the rise of digital networks has transformed many of these operations. Policing extends into digital environments.

As technologies of governance, algorithms do not simply fulfil administrative tasks. They also shape social reality in ways that affect social order (Just & Latzer, 2017). Introna (2016) argues that algorithmic systems are best understood through Foucault's idea of governmentality, which highlights the technologies through which governance is carried out. This perspective also brings questions of surveillance into view, together with issues such as perceived control and self-censorship.

2.11. From Disciplinary Surveillance to Platform-Mediated Governmentality

Power strategies that developed in institutions such as armies, prisons, and factories were gradually extended into wider social life (Foucault, 1995). Foucault's (1992) discussion of the panopticon highlights a form of surveillance in which individuals become visible to authority without knowing when they are being watched. Foucault's reading of the panopticon moves beyond Bentham's original prison design and treats it as a way of understanding control in modern institutional life (Teo, 2014). Prisoners cannot tell when observation is actually taking place, so they begin to assume that it may happen at any moment. As this possibility becomes internalised, they start to adjust their own behaviour accordingly (Foucault, 1992).

Surveillance was a tool of social control even before modernity. However, Bauman (1998) argues that in the modern age, surveillance has become fluid and no longer bound by spatial boundaries. Today, security is defined by the capacity to monitor the circulation of goods, information, and capital. While the concept of the panopticon remains relevant, Bauman (1998) argues that the traditional dependence between the observer and the observed has been increasingly replaced by mobility and decentralised forms of surveillance. As Bauman and Lyon (2013) point out, contemporary surveillance is increasingly dispersed, mobile, and less tied to the spatial logic of the panopticon. Information technologies have reshaped contemporary surveillance, giving rise to the concept of the superpanopticon.

For Poster (1990), the superpanopticon refers to surveillance tied to databases. It differs from earlier forms of surveillance because digital traces can be collected and

linked across networks. In this way, surveillance is not fixed to one physical site (Poster, 1990). This also resonates with Brivot and Gendron's (2011) argument that the panoptical metaphor is increasingly limited in digitalised environments characterised by lateral controls. In digitalised environments, surveillance is tied to observation, the processing of digital traces, profiling, and prediction. As Amoore and Raley (2017) suggest, algorithms have become important to contemporary security practices because they sort data, detect patterns, and act on uncertain futures in anticipatory ways.

Bauman (1998) writes about electronic databases that use information people give to let some in and keep others out. Database surveillance works differently because it is not tied to a single enclosed space. Haggerty and Ericson (2006) also point out that data monitoring allows surveillance capacities to connect across institutions and platforms. In this way, control becomes anticipatory and pre-emptive (Bogard, 2006). In policing, this is reflected in the use of big data analytics to predict where crimes are likely to occur and who is likely to commit them (Manes, 2019). Bauman and Lyon (2013) similarly argue that contemporary surveillance systems classify individuals through statistical inferences about likely behaviour. Surveillance works through risk-based classification and control systems rather than through the isolated observation of individuals.

In the superpanopticon, preferences, behaviour, digital traces become part of how individuals are made knowable. The state's growing reliance on data also gives information a strategic role in the organisation of social life (Bauman, 1998). From a governmentality perspective, this means that individuals are treated as objects of knowledge whose data can be observed, analysed, and used in governance (Foucault, 2007).

Government bodies, including the police, are continuously supplied with data generated through algorithmic monitoring. In this context, actors can become both agents and targets of surveillance. Instead of a single, top-down system, contemporary surveillance takes the form of a fluid and decentralised assemblage, where boundaries are unstable and observers themselves may be observed (Haggerty & Ericson, 2000).

Social media platforms have become part of surveillance, although they were not originally developed as surveillance tools. These technologies allow individuals across all levels of the social hierarchy to be observed (Haggerty & Ericson, 2006). Individuals often adopt these tools in everyday life without overt coercion or explicit pressure. Rather than only directly restricting people's movements or choices, contemporary surveillance tracks routine activities and adjusts interventions in line with observed behaviour. Gilliom (2006) suggests that the meaning and effects of surveillance depend on how people perceive monitoring, as well as the everyday tactics they develop to live with, negotiate, or resist it.

As digital technologies have expanded, individuals have become exposed to the tracking of their everyday activities. Much of the surveillance literature focuses on institutional arrangements, technological effectiveness, and the relationship between surveillance, policing, and crime control. For example, scholars study how officials assess surveillance effectiveness (Cayford & Pieters, 2018), often in counter-terrorism and border-security contexts rather than in relation to generic crime prevention (Jonas & Harper, 2006; Willis et al., 2010). Other studies analyse surveillance within broader policing and crime-control frameworks. Similarly, research re-examines the relevance of the panopticon metaphor to contemporary surveillance (Doyle, 2006; Haggerty & Ericson, 2006; Brivot & Gendron, 2011). In policing studies, surveillance is frequently discussed at institutional, legal, organisational, or system levels (de Vasconcelos Cardoso, 2012; Manes, 2019; Díaz, 2019; Egbert, 2019; Purshouse & Campbell, 2019; Loftus, 2019).

However, very few of these studies consider how individuals themselves perceive surveillance. Purshouse and Campbell (2019) examine the police use of automated facial recognition in public spaces, but they do not empirically discuss how citizens perceive this form of surveillance. Similarly, Loftus (2019) focuses on the routine character of covert policing but does not explore the subjective experience of being surveilled. Digital technologies are transforming surveillance and making monitoring more diffuse. For this reason, it becomes important to examine how people perceive surveillance.

This also makes it necessary to consider control mechanisms in digital environments and how users perceive their own control within them.

2.12. Perceived Behavioural Control and Control Mechanism

Do the police regulate individual behaviour merely through surveillance? With the growth of social networking sites, increasing amounts of rich personal data are shared and stored online. These data are used by individuals, businesses and governments for various purposes (Warner & Wang, 2019). For Foucault, power works through the shaping of conduct (Foucault, 2014a). While institutions like the police have historically functioned as agents of power, today's digital world deploys algorithms to extend this logic further. Algorithms are built to produce specific outcomes in light of presumed desires, needs and possibilities, and they influence how people act (Willson, 2019). Building on Foucault, Badouard et al. (2016) show how operating systems and algorithmic structures channel and limit online behaviour. They identify three logics of digital governmentality: incentive, design, and framing, each referring to a different way of steering action online.

Incentives refer to a form of power where institutions or individuals direct others to act in ways that serve their own interests, even though each user is, in principle, free to do so. Incentives influence user behaviour without direct pressure by making certain courses of action more attractive than others (Badouard et al., 2016). From a Foucauldian perspective, incentives are power techniques that shape what people are capable of doing, rather than directly forcing conformity (Badouard et al., 2016; Foucault, 2007).

Design refers to a form of power exercised by developers or platform architects who embed specific limitations into digital infrastructures. Technical limits subtly influence user behaviour, for example, by restricting the length of Twitter messages or keeping the order of comments on a Facebook post fixed (Badouard et al., 2016). In this sense, design-based governance manages the balance between what users can do and what organisations try to control.

Framing is the implicit structuring of user behaviour through the boundaries set by digital interfaces. There is no direct interaction between the regulating authority and

the user. Instead, systems such as Apple's iOS manage interaction through pre-defined application logic that dictates how users may act (Badouard et al., 2016). In other words, the movement area in which the subject is placed is determined. The options offered within this range of motion liberate and control the subject. From a Foucauldian perspective, framing renders the subject governable without direct intervention, generating new fields of action within calculable and rational practices (Foucault, 2014a).

Digital platforms mediate how users relate to the world through interfaces that organise perception. At the same time, they operate through subtle forms of control (Törnberg & Uitermark, 2020). Through their interfaces, platforms shape how users present themselves online. This influence may not always be recognised as monitoring, even when behaviour is guided by the norms embedded in the platform. Affordances are embedded in the subtle details of daily practice and mediate how technologies shape and are influenced by social order (Davis & Chouinard, 2017). Even in such structured digital environments, individuals may see themselves as autonomous actors. This perceived autonomy makes it important to examine individuals' perceived behavioural control in the context of social media. For this reason, it is important to examine how users perceive their own control in their use of social media.

According to Yzer (2012), perceived behavioural control reflects people's beliefs about whether they are able to perform a behaviour and the extent to which they feel they have control over doing so. Perceived control has also been discussed as a necessary dimension of the interaction between individuals and technology (Collier & Sherrell, 2010). For instance, Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999) found that the need for control is an important motivation for Web use. Similarly, Tariq et al. (2017) examined the factors contributing to intense Facebook use among university students and revealed that perceived behavioural control significantly influenced students' Facebook usage. Hajli and Lin (2016) revealed that perceived control negatively relates to perceived privacy risk and attitude towards information sharing, which impacts information-sharing behaviours. These findings highlight the importance of perceived control in social media users' information-sharing behaviours. Shin (2023) showed that users actively interpret algorithmic features and make sense of their

interactions with algorithmic systems. Liao and Tyson (2021) note that some users still think they can manage what others see online. One participant, for example, said that on Facebook, non-friends can only see the profile and tagged photos, while posts remain hidden (Liao & Tyson, 2021). Even in algorithmically governed environments, users can still experience social media as a space in which they remain in control, often by relying on privacy settings and similar tools.

In addition to the perception that control in digital environments lies with the user, the following section addresses perceptions of institutional use of data in these environments and the fairness of this use within the framework of data justice.

2.13. Perceived Data Justice

Collecting and analysing social media data has become part of the shift from reactive to proactive policing strategies. In the UK, this move towards pre-emptive policing intensified after the 2005 London bombings, when a pre-emptive logic became more central to policing practices (Dencik et al., 2018). Consequently, governments and institutions increasingly rely on big data analytics to predict, prevent, or intervene in real-time situations (Dencik et al., 2015).

Social media and related technologies have helped turn previously unquantifiable aspects of the world into data (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013). As institutions rely on data-driven processes to understand individuals and inform decision-making, this development has strengthened what Ansorge (2016) calls digital power. In this form, power operates by identifying, classifying, and acting on people through data. It also supports more continuous forms of surveillance as technological observation points expand across everyday life (Laval, 2012; Lyon, 2014).

As Lyon (2001) observes, modern society functions as a surveillance society in which state and corporate actors routinely collect, record, store, analyse and use personal data. Digital technologies are increasingly shaping social life through the collection and use of data about individuals and groups. As digital technologies take hold in daily life, surveillance becomes routine and adapts to technological change. Foucault (1992) uses the panopticon to show that the mere possibility of being seen leads individuals to regulate themselves. This is reflected in the way modern nation-states have used

surveillance systems to monitor, manage and discipline populations (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2017).

Big data operates within contemporary governance through data-driven prediction and forecasting (Just & Latzer, 2017). In the UK, law enforcement relies on large datasets to protect communities (Stanier, 2016). Predictive policing algorithms are used to estimate when and where crime may occur (Just & Latzer, 2017). Social media investigations make everyday life more visible to police (Trottier, 2012). Although big data promises more efficient, rational, and objective decision-making, its use in governance and governmentality has raised concerns about inequality and discrimination.

Big data is often presented as a powerful tool for detecting social risks, yet it also raises serious concerns about surveillance, accountability and transparency (Dencik et al., 2015). It may also reinforce bias and expand forms of monitoring. Therefore, algorithms should be understood not as neutral technical codes but as socially constructed and institutionally managed mechanisms (Gillespie, 2014). Dencik et al. (2018) argue that because humans collect data and design algorithms, data-driven systems tend to reproduce their expertise, judgements and biases. As big data expands, surveillance concerns become more visible because more information is collected and analysed (Aradau & Blanke, 2015; Lyon, 2014; Bauman et al., 2014). Dencik and Sanchez-Monedero (2022) relate this to questions of fairness.

Data justice refers to how data is acquired and used, how it affects society, and how data practices are shaped by various forms of institutional organisation; in this sense, it is not simply a technical issue (Dencik & Sanchez-Monedero, 2022). It has also been described as an ethical benchmark for assessing data-related resources, processes, structures (Heeks & Renken, 2018) and as a way of ensuring fair treatment in how people are made visible and represented through the digital data they generate (Taylor, 2017). It also draws attention to structural inequality and the uneven implications and experiences of data across different social groups (Dencik et al., 2019).

Taylor (2017) proposes a framework for understanding data justice through three core pillars that can guide data governance: (in)visibility, (dis)engagement with technology,

and anti-discrimination. One important element of this framework is people's freedom to control the terms of their engagement with data markets. Taylor (2017) also argues that a central challenge of data justice is how to balance the need to be visible and appropriately represented with the need for autonomy and integrity. Through this lens, Taylor (2017) outlines both the positive and negative potential of data technologies in advancing human development. Dencik and Sanchez-Monedero (2022) treat classification mechanisms not simply as privacy issues but as justice issues shaped by historical contexts, social structures, and dominant agendas.

Data are embedded in the instruments, practices, and systems that generate, process, and analyse them, and their scope and meaning follow from the choices and technical procedures of those who produce them (Sourbati & Behrendt, 2021). In government and public services, such data can have force through their uptake and deployment, including by law enforcement and other agencies (Sourbati & Behrendt, 2021). Metcalfe and Dencik (2019) argue that data justice is essential as digital technologies expand datafied governance. Williams and Kind (2019) argue that data-driven policing can deepen discrimination against minority ethnic communities, as biometric and predictive tools are more likely to misidentify them and keep the same communities under police attention.

Technology in policing is used by authorities with the power to use force and restrict liberty (Aston et al., 2022). Big data can help prevent crime, but its use can also widen existing inequalities (Aston et al., 2022). Individuals are less likely to cooperate with the police if they perceive practices as unfair. In a digital context, perceptions of data justice can shape public attitudes towards the police and their intention to cooperate. These concerns are also closely connected to how individuals manage and limit their online expressions, which is addressed in the following section on self-censorship on social media.

2.14. Self-Censorship on Social Media

Self-censorship is defined as the act of deliberately withholding one's honest opinion in situations where it is perceived that others may disagree (Hayes et al., 2005). For a behaviour to qualify as self-censorship, two conditions must be met: the individual

must consciously choose not to express themselves, and there must be a communicative context in which expression is otherwise possible (Hayes et al., 2005). For example, people may self-censor because they have internalised political norms or become cautious about sharing controversial content within the informational culture they inhabit (Parks & Mukherjee, 2017).

Although self-censorship occurs in face-to-face communication, it has taken on distinct characteristics in digital environments, particularly on social media platforms. Social media makes self-censorship an integral part of online interaction by allowing users to retract and review their content before publishing (Das & Kramer, 2013). Although online social network sites expand possibilities for social connection, they also generate serious concerns about users' privacy (Acquisti & Gross, 2006). Users may resort to self-censorship, refraining from posting in order to protect their own or others' privacy or to avoid potential regret (Sleeper et al., 2013).

Although social media platforms offer customisable privacy settings, users may still rely on their own judgement about what to share, rather than on privacy controls alone (Acquisti & Gross, 2006). Self-censorship therefore persists even when privacy controls are available, since users are managing not only privacy but also the co-presence of multiple audiences (Wisniewski et al., 2012; Das & Kramer, 2013; Sleeper et al., 2013). Lampinen et al. (2009) identify self-censorship as one of the strategies users employ to manage multiple social groups on social networking sites. Similarly, Marwick and boyd (2011) show that Twitter users avoid certain topics and rely on self-censorship as they navigate overlapping audiences in networked publics.

Digital platforms, presented as spaces of freedom, function as control technologies whose interfaces limit what users can do and shape their behaviour and identities (Törnberg & Uitermark, 2020). In line with this view, greater perceived control over information is associated with lower perceived privacy risk and more positive attitudes toward information sharing (Hajli & Lin, 2016). However, users may still self-censor despite the availability of selective sharing features. Sleeper et al. (2013) found that participants would have shared about half of their unshared content if they had been able to control more precisely who could see it.

Even when individuals continue to use social media platforms, they do not necessarily accept the forms of control these platforms impose on communication. Users may actively seek to avoid surveillance of their interactions, resist corporate or governmental oversight, or adopt coded or suppressed forms of language (Cobbe, 2021). Even individuals who have done nothing wrong may self-censor because of perceived algorithmic limitations or biases in interpreting language and imagery (Cobbe, 2021). Stoycheff (2016) further argues that people are more inclined to self-censor when they believe they are being watched and perceive such surveillance as legitimate.

Foucault suggests that once people know they are visible, they begin to regulate themselves and adapt their behaviour to the expectations built into that system of power (Foucault, 1995). Under digital surveillance, this kind of self-regulation can appear as restraint in what people search, say, or share online (Manokha, 2018). Surveillance can make people careful about what they share online (Tanriverdi & Chen, 2018). For Foucault, governing is concerned with shaping conduct through a range of techniques (Foucault, 1993). Governmentality concerns the shaping of conduct rather than the use of overt force. Thus, individuals may change their behaviour in response to power or resort to self-censorship. For instance, individuals may self-censor on social media because of surveillance concerns, distrust, or doubts about how their data are handled. In this context, self-censorship among social media users may affect the relationship between the police and the community.

Cobbe (2021) argues that platforms can limit what appears online. In policing contexts, people may begin to regulate their own expression in response to ideas of security and order. Joseph (2010) shows how rationalities, institutions, techniques regulate social conduct, and Foucault (1982) argues that power works by shaping the field of possible action for subjects. Social platforms can also set the boundaries of acceptable speech, with some posts blocked as soon as they are uploaded (Cobbe, 2021). Stoycheff (2016) demonstrates that surveillance cues reduce people's willingness to express minority views in hostile opinion climates.

This chapter reviewed the main constructs and relevant literature that frame the study and addressed the UK policing context. It discussed policing perceptions, social media

affordances, digital efficacy, perceived control, data justice, surveillance, and self-censorship as the main constructs of the research. Building on this discussion, the next chapter develops the research models and presents the study's hypotheses.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the research models are developed and the hypotheses are formulated in line with the study's conceptual framework. The relationships among policing perceptions, digital control mechanisms, perceived social media affordances, self-censorship on social media, intention to cooperate with the police, and digital efficacy are examined through two models, with particular attention to the UK policing context. The first model examines the effects of perceptions of trust, legitimacy, procedural justice, and police effectiveness on intention to cooperate with the police. In this model, the possible mediating roles of perceived social media affordances and self-censorship on social media are also considered. The second model focuses on the effects of perceived data justice on social media, perceived control on social media, and perceived surveillance on social media on intention to cooperate with the police and digital efficacy. In this model, perceived social media affordances and self-censorship are also addressed as mediating mechanisms. Throughout the chapter, the rationale underlying these relationships is explained, and the related hypotheses are presented.

3.2. Developing the Research Models and Hypotheses

This section develops the two research models and the related hypotheses by clarifying the relationships among the study variables in the UK policing context.

3.2.1. Exploring Variables Impacting Public Cooperation with the Police

Effective policing rests on the active cooperation and support of the public. Without the cooperation of citizens, what the police can do to solve known crimes, maintain order or prevent crime is limited (Rosenbaum et al., 2005). In the British tradition of policing by consent, police authority depends on public approval and citizens' willing cooperation with the law (Home Office, 2012). Many studies have explored when and why people are willing to cooperate with the police. Hough et al. (2013), using data from 26 countries in the fifth round of the European Social Survey (including the UK), find relationships between public trust in the police and perceptions of police

legitimacy. Jackson et al. (2012a) show that both felt obligation to obey the police and moral alignment with the police are strong predictors of people's willingness to cooperate with legal authorities. Using survey data from England and Wales, Jackson et al. (2012c) test how police contact relates to trust and perceived legitimacy, and how these orientations predict stated willingness to cooperate. Treating legitimacy as comprising both duty to obey and moral alignment with the police, they report that each dimension is associated with cooperation. Clayman and Skinns (2012) find that young people's willingness to provide information to the police depends in part on their relationships with their peers.

Existing research on police cooperation has largely been developed around perceptions of policing in physical spaces, such as neighbourhood settings and face-to-face encounters. This creates a need to explore perceptions of policing in digital spaces, such as social media, and their impact on cooperation with the police. However, there is relatively limited research on how users' perceptions of social media relate to their intentions to cooperate with the police. UK policing guidance notes that the rapid growth of social networking has opened new channels for community contact and encourages police forces to use social media to strengthen communication, consultation and local engagement, as well as accountability and transparency (MDP, 2013). As the police make greater use of these platforms to present themselves, to become visible and to interact with communities, it becomes necessary to reconsider how policing is perceived in social media environments and what consequences this has for police–community relations. This thesis reconsiders the relationship between perceptions of policing and intention to cooperate with the police in the context of social media.

Social media creates an environment in which policing is encountered and discussed. Cooperation with the police may also be affected by digital control mechanisms such as perceived control, perceived surveillance, and perceived data justice. Perceived social media affordances and self-censorship on social media are treated as mediators that may help explain the relationships among these variables. Therefore, this study addresses intention to cooperate with the police and digital efficacy through two related but distinct models.

3.2.2. MODEL I: Policing Perceptions and Digitally Mediated Cooperation Model

The first research model examines the underlying perceptions that influence intentions to cooperate with the police and how these perceptions are mediated through social media opportunities and self-censorship. In this model, the effects of four fundamental policing perceptions (perceived police trust, perceived police effectiveness, perceived legitimacy, perceived procedural justice) on cooperation with the police and how these effects are shaped through social media affordances (association, persistence, visibility, interaction) and self-censorship are investigated.

3.2.2.1. Effects of Policing Perceptions on Cooperation with the Police

This subsection outlines the policing perceptions used in the study and their proposed relationships with individuals' intention to cooperate with the police.

3.2.2.1.1. Trust in the Police

Higher trust in the police is associated with a greater willingness to cooperate with and assist officers (Bradford & Jackson, 2016). Individuals who trust the police tend to feel safer in their lives (Schaap, 2021). Levels of trust can change following major, unexpected events, such as crises or high-profile incidents (Nägel & Nivette, 2023). Higher levels of trust are generally associated with greater willingness to cooperate, whereas experiences or perceptions of unfair treatment can undermine (Bradford & Jackson, 2016; Clayman & Skinns, 2012). Trust through positive feelings was linked to support for armed policing in London (Yesberg & Bradford, 2019). Trust in the police leads to greater cooperation among people and can contribute to the unquestioning acceptance of certain security policies and a greater perception of state power as natural and necessary.

Bradford and Jackson (2024) state that when trust declines, cooperative behaviours such as reporting crime and providing information to the police weaken, and they refer to this as low cooperation traps. Torrible (2022) emphasises that trust in the police is one of the determinants of public cooperation. Bradford (2024) found that trust in the police in England and Wales has fluctuated over the last 25 years rather than following

a linear upward trend. Other studies in the UK also emphasise that trust is a dynamic construct that has to be constantly restored (Bradford & Jackson, 2024; Merry et al., 2012). Considering the dynamic nature of trust, it is important to retest it at different times. Also, testing this relationship in the thesis is necessary to examine mediating effects in the following phases. It is, therefore, hypothesised that:

H1: Higher perceived police trust has a positive effect on intention to cooperate with the police.

Perceived police legitimacy, another important factor in police-community cooperation, is discussed in the following section.

3.2.2.1.2. Perceived Police Legitimacy

The perceived legitimacy plays a central role in how fair and respectful treatment translates into associated prosocial behavioural outcomes such as cooperation (Kearns et al., 2020). Consistent with this, Tankebe (2013) shows that when legitimacy is examined through its dimensions, perceived police lawfulness and procedural fairness emerge as the strongest predictors of citizens' willingness to cooperate with the police. Tankebe (2013) also shows that legitimacy affects willingness to cooperate both directly and indirectly via citizens' felt obligation to obey. Bradford et al. (2015), examining the effect of legitimacy on the intention to comply with traffic laws, found that procedural justice experience increased perceptions of police legitimacy. In addition, the study revealed the importance of procedural justice in promoting social cohesion. Stott et al. (2012) observed that the perceived legitimacy level of football fans increased due to their relationship with the police. Jackson et al. (2012b) found that procedural justice and legitimacy were related to individuals' willingness to obey the law. In addition, it has been revealed that contact with the police and procedural justice are predictors of legitimacy (Jackson et al., 2012a).

Jackson et al. (2013) found that positive perceptions of legitimacy were associated with more negative views of the use of violence. Shannon (2021) has concluded that the power of chief officers and control over their performance play an important role in ensuring that the police are effective and legitimate. Contrary to these studies, Huq et al. (2011) found no direct relationship between legitimacy and cooperation. This

indicates the need for further research to reveal the relationships between legitimacy and cooperation. At this point, perceived legitimacy is expected to impact the intention to cooperate with the police. It is, therefore, hypothesised that:

H2: Higher perceived police legitimacy has a positive effect on intention to cooperate with the police.

Perceived procedural justice, another important factor in police-community cooperation, is discussed in the following section.

3.2.2.1.3. Perceived Procedural Justice

Perceived procedural justice is closely linked to police-community cooperation. Since police depend on public cooperation to identify offenders and combat crime, procedural justice is highly relevant to police effectiveness (Tyler, 2003). MacQueen and Bradford (2015) tested whether written and verbal communication of procedural justice during routine encounters between the public and the police would positively affect the public and increase police legitimacy. The results showed that the intervention did not improve trust and legitimacy. It was also revealed that the intervention did not significantly affect the general trust in the police or the legitimacy of the police. Jackson et al. (2013), in a study of young men from various ethnic minority communities in London, found that procedural justice was strongly correlated with police legitimacy. Murray et al. (2021) addressed procedural justice in the context of young people's stop-and-search experiences in England and Scotland. Their findings indicate that the way police officers treat young people during these encounters influences how the police are judged.

These studies have mainly focused on the relationship between perceived procedural justice and legitimacy rather than on its relationship with intention to cooperate with the police. However, few studies have been found on procedural justice and intention to police cooperation in the UK context. Stanko et al. (2012) discussed procedural justice as a relevant framework for understanding trust, legitimacy, and more cooperative police-public relations. Kyprianides et al. (2021) examined both a general population sample and a street population sample in London and found that procedural justice was positively linked to cooperation with the police. When individuals perceive

police treatment as fair and respectful, they are more likely to cooperate with them. In their study among London residents, Bradford and Jackson (2016) showed that procedural justice was linked to public cooperation with the police. Jackson et al. (2012b) found that procedural justice is associated with individuals' willingness to obey the law. Bradford (2014) found that perceived procedural justice was linked to stronger identification with the UK among young ethnic minority men. Although these studies conducted in the UK context show that there is a relationship between procedural justice and the intention to cooperate with the police, this relationship still requires further validation and a more comprehensive understanding. It is, therefore, hypothesised that:

H3: Higher perceived procedural justice has a positive effect on intention to cooperate with the police.

The following section discusses perceived police effectiveness.

3.2.2.1.4. Perceived Police Effectiveness

Perceived police effectiveness refers to citizens' evaluations of how well the police control crime and disorder and carry out their duties in the local area (Bradford & Jackson, 2016). However, findings on how perceived effectiveness relates to intention to cooperate are not entirely consistent. For instance, Bradford and Jackson (2010) showed that, when trust in police fairness is taken into account, those who have more trust in police effectiveness actually report lower willingness to cooperate. In contrast, their later study (Bradford & Jackson, 2016) found that higher perceived effectiveness was positively related to willingness to cooperate, although this effect was weaker than that of trust in police fairness and community engagement. Tankebe (2013) found that perceived effectiveness was positively related to cooperation among crime victims but negatively related among non-victims.

The relatively limited number of studies on the effectiveness of the police in the current UK literature is notable. As in other perceptions of policing, the role of social media is ignored in the literature on perceived police effectiveness. Therefore, more evidence is needed on the relationship between perceived police effectiveness and cooperation. Current studies suggest no clear consensus on the relationship between perceived

police effectiveness and cooperation. Bradford and Jackson (2010) found a negative association, whereas later studies suggest that this relationship may vary depending on the context and the group under study (Bradford & Jackson, 2016; Tankebe, 2013). These contradictory findings of perceived police effectiveness in influencing cooperation suggest the need for further investigation into the role of perceived police effectiveness in influencing cooperation. When individuals perceived the police as effective, they could believe that they could solve any situation or event immediately. In this case, their intention to cooperate with the police may be affected because they believe or do not believe the police can solve the cases. For instance, the Crime Survey for England and Wales showed that 49% of respondents rated their local police as doing a good or excellent job, while 51% of victims reported satisfaction with the police response (Office for National Statistics, 2025). It is, therefore, hypothesised that:

H4: Higher perceived police effectiveness has a positive effect on intention to cooperate with the police.

The following section discusses the mediating roles of perceived social media affordances and self-censorship on social media.

3.2.2.2. Mediation Effects in the Policing Perceptions and Digitally Mediated Cooperation Model

The mediating roles of social media affordances and self-censorship in the relationships between perceptions of policing and intention to cooperate with the police are examined in this section.

3.2.2.2.1. Perceived Social Media Affordances

In contemporary policing, social media supports communication and may help make police more accountable. Police can address communities without traditional newsroom gatekeeping, so the public can receive police messages in full and unedited form (Wood & McGovern, 2021). When face-to-face contact was restricted during the COVID-19 pandemic, police used social media to communicate with local communities and share public health guidance and service updates (Hu et al., 2022).

Social media has the potential to make police communication more transparent (Boateng & Chenane, 2020). Among followers of police accounts, those who view and respond to posts more frequently report higher satisfaction with the police (Williams & Fedorowicz, 2019).

Gascó et al. (2017) examined citizens' Twitter communications with and about the police during the 2011 riots in the UK, and they concluded that citizens' social media use was a factor in shaping the organisational image and legitimacy of police forces. Ralph (2022) displays that police legitimacy on social media takes the form of an ongoing dialogue and has a dynamic structure. His study also indicates that people make sense of online legitimacy in connection with how they understand policing in the physical world. Ralph (2020) argues that when the police communicate on social media, power can shift away from the police to citizens, underlining the role of social media in how legitimacy is negotiated.

Bergquist et al. (2015) suggest that social media can make police work more visible, while also exposing it to greater public scrutiny and communication risks. Jones et al. (2025) examine how police officers and staff in England use visual tools to build digital visibility on social media and support public engagement. Individuals who see the police more frequently and feel informed about police activity report higher confidence in police effectiveness, fairness and engagement with the community (Bradford et al., 2009). In parallel, both higher police visibility and greater police strength in an area have been shown to increase public confidence in the police (Sindall & Sturgis, 2013). Yesberg et al. (2023) show that police visibility predicts higher trust in police fairness, and that trust in police fairness predicts higher collective efficacy.

Qiu (2021) emphasises that the new visibility generated by police Twitter use may be associated with perceptions of legitimacy, but this increased visibility is institutionally constrained by image management pressures. This perspective indicates that what the public sees online about the police depends on both the affordances of social media and how the police choose to use them. Bullock et al. (2021) argue that social media affordances such as visibility, editability and association structure police–community engagement in ways that may shape public perceptions of policing.

Persistence, the automatic recording and archiving of online statements in networked public, fundamentally changes the nature of participation (boyd, 2010). This persistence allows messages to remain accessible after presentation, records to be open for search and review, and communication to produce results over time (Treem & Leonardi, 2013). Asynchronous interaction is facilitated because the content remains persistent, but messages detached from context can be interpreted differently (boyd, 2010). In police communication, this persistence can foster a perception of transparency and consistency, fostering trust and cooperation. On the other hand, it can weaken the relationship through a sense of traceability.

Social media moves police–community encounters into digital spaces and opens up more ways to connect and engage through its interactive affordances (Henry, 2024). In crisis situations, these channels also support communication efforts to keep the public informed, monitor emerging information and provide guidance to citizens (Procter et al., 2013a). Social media is often expected to lower participation barriers and enable low-cost, direct communication between public agencies, including the police, and citizens (Hand & Ching, 2020). Twitter communication by the police can slightly enhance perceived police legitimacy, primarily through transparency (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2015). Cartwright and Shaw (2020) revealed overwhelming public support for police use of social media and provided evidence that it can facilitate greater confidence in the police. Participants also reported that following police accounts had changed their perceptions of the police. Interaction on social media can facilitate the raising of sensitive issues by providing citizens with a safer contact channel when communicating with police (Grogger et al., 2024). The feeling of mutual understanding may strengthen people’s intention to cooperate. One of the main factors that increases individuals’ trust in the police is to increase the quality of interactions between them (Brown & Hobbs, 2023). Clayman and Skinnis (2012) demonstrate that young people’s trust in the police can be altered by their encounters with officers. Trust among people who have no direct contact with the police can also change. Therefore, even individuals who have not had face-to-face contact with the police may have their existing perceptions reinforced or changed through social media affordances, which may influence their intention to cooperate with the police. It is, therefore, hypothesised that:

H5: (a) Visibility, (b) interaction, (c) association, and (d) persistence affordances positively mediate the effects of perceived procedural justice, perceived trust, perceived legitimacy, and perceived police effectiveness on intention to cooperate with the police.

Another mediating variable considered in this study is self-censorship on social media.

3.2.2.2.2. Self-Censorship on Social Media

Trust in the police, perception of procedural justice and legitimacy are among the important factors that positively affect individuals' intentions to cooperate with the police (Tyler, 2006; Kochel et al., 2013; Bradford & Jackson, 2016). Similarly, the perception of police effectiveness can also positively affect individuals' intentions to cooperate (Tankebe, 2009). However, these positive perceptions may not always be directly reflected in individuals' behaviours. On platforms such as social media, individuals may restrict their sharing or participation even if they have positive perceptions. Especially on these platforms, individuals' feeling that they are being monitored or evaluated may lead to self-censorship in their expression and participation behaviours (Stoycheff, 2016). Such self-censorship may cause an individual to avoid police cooperation despite their positive perceptions of the police.

The relationship between the police and the community is complex and influenced by various factors, such as communication and public perceptions. An essential but often overlooked aspect is self-censorship. Self-censorship is greatly affected by the attitudes and perceptions of individuals (Bar-Tal, 2017b). Individuals may intentionally withhold their opinions because they expect negative reactions or feel hesitant to voice criticism, leading them to stay silent. Through self-censorship, large amounts of information, reasoning, and public commentary never reach the open sphere of discussion (Sturges, 2008). Individuals who think that telling the police about a problem will not change anything may decide not to contact them at all. This feeling that nothing will change anyway is similar to what Adamska (2017) calls acquiescent self-censorship.

Those who perceive the effectiveness of the police as low are less likely to cooperate with the police, and self-censorship can increase this effect. If individuals perceive that

the police are not acting fairly and respectfully, they are less likely to cooperate with the police, and self-censorship reinforces this situation. When the police are not perceived as fair, people are less likely to interact or share information with the police. As a result, low perceptions of policing negatively affect the intention to cooperate with the police, and self-censorship increases the effect between these two relations. However, to the best of current knowledge, this relationship has not yet been examined in existing studies.

It is essential to draw attention to this literature gap and address the relationships between policing perceptions (trust, effectiveness, legitimacy, procedural justice) and self-censorship. Furthermore, since the contribution of individuals who make up the society cannot be denied in maintaining the police-community relationship, it is as important as cooperation to examine the reasons that lead them to self-censorship. It is, therefore, hypothesised that:

H6: Self-censorship on social media negatively mediates the effects of (a) trust, (b) procedural justice, (c) legitimacy, and (d) police effectiveness on intention to cooperate with the police.

Based on the literature review and the formulated hypothesis, the following model illustrates the relationships between these constructs and intention to cooperate with the police.

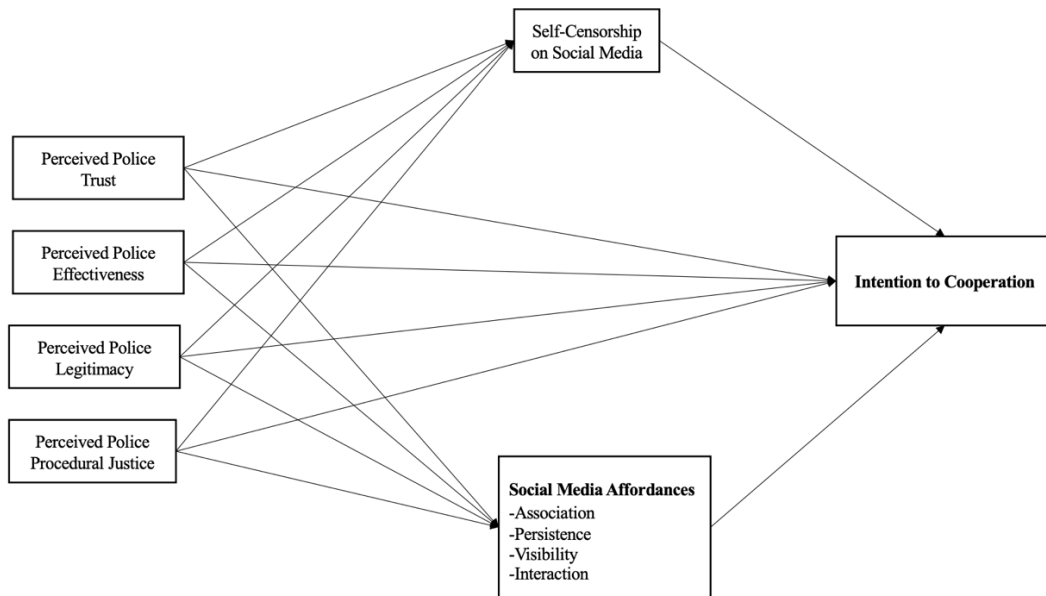


Figure 1. Policing Perceptions and Digitally Mediated Cooperation Model

3.2.3. MODEL II: Digital Control Mechanisms and Police Cooperation Model

In this model, the effects of three perceptions (perceived control, perceived surveillance, perceived data justice) on cooperation with the police and digital efficacy and how these effects are mediated through social media affordances (association, persistence, visibility, interaction) and self-censorship are investigated.

3.2.3.1. Effects of Digital Control Mechanisms on Cooperation with the Police and Digital Efficacy

This section focuses on the relationships between digital control mechanisms, digital efficacy, and intention to cooperate with the police.

3.2.3.1.1. Perceived Data Justice on Social Media

While data is a power for the police, it also has the task of creating inequalities or reinforcing existing inequalities for individuals. In other words, although social media data positively affect policing in maintaining the order of society, such as predicting a crime, this also leads to increased discriminatory practices or inequalities (Aston et al., 2022). Data collection, classification, and surveillance function as instruments of

police control that shape societal power relations and perceptions of justice. Individuals perceive these processes as control mechanisms.

Williams and Kind (2019) revealed that the potential effects of police use of data-driven technology suggest that ethnic minority communities are negatively impacted. In such cases, data justice comes to the fore. The study (Williams & Kind, 2019), which includes the UK, argues that surveillance and analysis technologies are subject to excessive control over minority groups and communities relative to other people in society. In the UK, Big Brother Watch (2017) found that 93% of police forces extract data from seized digital devices, including those belonging to suspects, victims, and witnesses. Big Brother Watch (2019) warns that police can routinely download extensive data from victims' phones, often beyond what is necessary for an investigation. In this sense, victims may be subjected to the kind of broad data collection more commonly directed at suspects. Dencik et al. (2018) analyse how social media and big data are tied to proactive forms of governance, focusing on protest policing in the UK and situating these algorithmic processes within actual police practices. They also highlight three central problems in data-driven policing, including embedded biases and agendas, reliance on software shaped by commercial logics, and the challenge of interpreting unpredictability in social media data. Stanier (2016) outlines the primary big data sets available to UK law enforcement agencies. It also illustrates how big data is used to safeguard communities, reduce crime, and address anti-social behaviour in line with legal responsibilities. At the same time, its use raises organisational, technological, ethical, and cultural challenges. Strauß (2015) found that citizens in a European study that included the UK expressed significant concerns about privacy, particularly regarding excessive data collection and the possible misuse of personal information.

Current studies that draw attention to data justice have not focused on individuals' perceptions of data justice. This situation points to an essential gap in the existing literature on the role of perceived data justice in police-society cooperation. As mentioned in other sections, police use big data depending on surveillance. In this context, UK literature has drawn attention to data justice (e.g., Dencik et al., 2018). However, studies have yet to be conducted on individuals' perceptions of data justice

regarding policing, indicating a research gap. As discussed earlier, although big data positively affects issues such as crime prevention, it is known to bring along concerns such as discrimination or inequality. Such concerns are likely to distract individuals from cooperating with the police. In the study, it is expected that perceived data justice can affect individuals' intention to cooperate with the police. It is, therefore, hypothesised that:

H7: Perceived data justice on social media has a positive effect on intention to cooperate with the police.

The next section discusses perceived control on social media.

3.2.3.1.2. Perceived Control on Social Media

In this thesis, perceived control on social media refers to individuals' belief that they can manage what they share, who can see it and how they conduct themselves on social media. It also includes the sense that privacy settings and other platform tools allow them to set boundaries around their personal information and visibility. Although social media offers individuals the freedom to communicate and connect, it can also give rise to situations beyond their control and even expose them to control by others (Denef et al., 2012). Affordances such as association and persistence may challenge users' ability to exercise agency and control over their actions (Trepte, 2021). These affordances enable others (such as the police) to exert control. For instance, individuals may become connected to other users or content beyond their consent, and others may later use any shared content (Malsbender, 2013; Treem & Leonardi, 2013). Once content is shared on social media, the sender has little control over its later use (Trepte, 2021).

For instance, even if users set their posts to be visible to friends only, they ultimately lose control over how their friends use or further share this content (Brandimarte et al., 2013). As Trepte (2021) notes, one person's control ends where another's begins. Despite this, social media platforms attempt to foster a sense of user control by offering adjustable privacy settings that allow users to regulate who can access what information (Brandimarte et al., 2013). However, individuals are subject to control

through regulating and limiting their behavioural choices. Although they may feel autonomous in their actions, their possible choices and behaviours are shaped in accordance with legal frameworks, regulations, and prevailing social norms (Schuilenburg & Peeters, 2021). Social media does not just passively reflect users' preferences. It is based on algorithmic structures that record and classify users' actions and use these data to make predictions about their future behaviour. Algorithmic organisation indirectly shapes individuals' fields of action by determining which content they may encounter, which interactions become visible, and which expressions become risky. Individuals' perceptions of control over their social media environment may influence their intention to cooperate with the police.

In the UK context, only a few studies have explored perceived control. Hansen et al. (2018) found that perceived behavioural control was positively associated with individuals' intentions to use social networking services for transactions. Beyond this, however, little is known about how perceived control on social media relates to other relevant outcomes, such as cooperation with the police. This suggests that perceived control on social media remains underexplored in policing research. Given that individuals' sense of control may shape their willingness to engage, it is plausible to expect that perceived control on social media may influence intentions to cooperate with the police. When individuals perceive themselves to be in control of their social media, they may feel more autonomous, which may increase their intention to cooperate with the police. It is, therefore, hypothesised that:

H8: Perceived control on social media has a positive effect on intention to cooperate with the police.

The following section discusses the effects of being subject to surveillance by police on social media.

3.2.3.1.3. Perceived Surveillance on Social Media

In this study, perceived surveillance on social media refers to individuals' general sense of being monitored on social media. It captures the perceptions that platforms, organisations, and other actors can observe users' actions, collect data, and use that information. Rather than separating surveillance into forms such as commercial data

mining, biometric profiling, or predictive surveillance, this study approaches it as a broader perception of being monitored on social media. It focuses on how this perceived monitoring relates to police cooperation and digital efficacy. With the rapid development of technology, constant monitoring, tracking, and recording have become embedded in everyday life. Although several studies have explored social media surveillance outside the UK (e.g., Doyle, 2006; Haggerty & Ericson, 2006; Brivot & Gendron, 2011; de Vasconcelos Cardoso, 2012; Manes, 2019; Díaz, 2019; Egbert, 2019; Purshouse & Campbell, 2019; Loftus, 2019), research focusing specifically on the UK context remains limited (Kadivar, 2015; Egawhary, 2019). For instance, Kadivar (2015) examined how UK authorities monitored protesters' social media and mobile phone communications during the 2011 riots and argued that these surveillance practices were justified in the name of public order and security. The study further suggests that the UK adopted a panoptic approach during these events. Through an analysis of UK police policy documents, Egawhary (2019) found that social media is framed as a communication tool as well as a means of surveillance and counter-surveillance.

While these studies highlight how surveillance is legitimised at the institutional level, little is known about how perceived surveillance on social media may affect individuals' intentions to cooperate with the police in the UK. Veliz (2020) suggests that surveillance can erode privacy and discourage open disclosure of sensitive information. This deterrence may be because perceived surveillance violates personal privacy and creates an atmosphere of threat or suspicion for individuals. As a result, individuals who feel monitored may be less willing to engage with or support the police. It is, therefore, hypothesised that:

H9: Perceived surveillance on social media has a negative effect on intention to cooperate with the police.

Digital efficacy is considered next as one of the study's outcomes.

3.2.3.1.4. Digital Efficacy

Social media provides a suitable environment for collective activity. The affordances it provides, such as interaction, visibility, persistence, and association, can broaden the

scope of collective efficacy by enabling broader participation. In this study, digital efficacy refers to individuals' belief in their ability to shape a common social situation, direct collective action, and ensure effective participation as individuals or groups using social media tools. In this sense, digital efficacy is also about believing that effective coordination with others is possible in digital settings. This point is broadly consistent with Glassman et al.'s (2021) discussion of online collective efficacy, which emphasises both the ability to contribute meaningfully and the capacity to work constructively with others in an online community. In this respect, the value of social media affordances depends on how users perceive them in relation to their needs and purposes in digital environments (Baden et al., 2025). Ellison and Boyd (2013) describe social network sites as spaces where users can see others' connections and shared content. This kind of visibility may help make collective activity more visible to users. Persistence enables users to search for and revisit information previously shared on social media (Sun et al., 2020). Similarly, visibility makes users and their content more accessible, thereby facilitating access to information (Sæbø et al., 2020). Association affordance may also support digital efficacy by making social ties and shared networks more visible in digital settings. Halpern et al. (2017) show that platform-specific interaction dynamics influence how social media use relates to collective efficacy. In this context, interaction affordance may also support digital efficacy by enabling users to respond to others, exchange views, and engage with shared content. Together, these affordances may strengthen digital efficacy.

Existing research in the UK has mainly examined collective efficacy in relation to physical neighbourhoods rather than digital environments. Bradford and Jackson (2016) found that willingness to cooperate with the police was higher among those who perceived stronger social cohesion and greater confidence that local residents would intervene on behalf of the collective good. Brunton-Smith et al. (2018) reported variation across neighbourhoods in average levels of collective efficacy and in the extent of agreement among residents' evaluations. Yesberg et al. (2023) found that police visibility predicted trust in police fairness, which then predicted collective efficacy over time. Sutherland et al. (2013) also found a weak negative relationship between collective efficacy and police-recorded violence in London. These studies demonstrate the importance of efficacy-related beliefs in shaping social outcomes, but

they do not address how such beliefs may operate in social media environments. This highlights an important gap in the literature. Building on this gap, the study argues that perceived social media affordances may contribute to digital efficacy. It is therefore hypothesised that:

H10: (a) Visibility, (b) interaction, (c) association, and (d) persistence affordances have positive direct effects on digital efficacy.

The following section considers the mediating roles of perceived social media affordances and self-censorship on social media and develops the related hypotheses.

3.2.3.2. Mediation Effects in the Digital Control Mechanisms and Police Cooperation Model

This section discusses how social media affordances and self-censorship on social media mediate the relationship between digital control mechanisms and intention to cooperate with the police.

3.2.3.2.1. Perceived Social Media Affordances and Digital Efficacy

Social media platforms provide police forces with faster and more interactive means of communicating with citizens than traditional media tools (Meijer & Torenvlied, 2016). Aware of this potential, police forces have established an active presence on social media platforms. Numerous studies have examined how UK police utilise social media (e.g., Crump, 2011; Deneff et al., 2013; Egawhary, 2019; Nikolovska et al., 2020; Ralph et al., 2022). For instance, Crump (2011) analysed tweets from a small sample of local police accounts and found that Twitter was primarily used as a reference and announcement tool to support traditional policing functions. The study concluded that Twitter served as a valuable medium for public communication. Egawhary (2019) analysed internal policy documents and official guidance obtained through freedom of information requests sent to 46 UK police forces. The study found that these documents advised police staff to use both surveillance and counter-surveillance strategies when using social media for policing purposes. Similarly, Nikolovska et al. (2020) showed that police primarily used social media to disseminate information to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. Procter et al. (2013b)

analysed how UK police, groups and individuals used Twitter to respond to riots. Although police had access to valuable intelligence through the platform, the study concluded that they faced challenges using social media effectively during crises.

Although the literature on police use of social media varies regarding social media practices and samples examined, studies revealing individuals' perceptions of police use of social media are limited (Cartwright & Shaw, 2020; Ralph, 2022). This suggests that the literature has focused more on the relationship between police and social media than on individuals' perceptions. Little attention has been given to how individuals interpret the police's presence on social media or the potential communicative affordances social media offers for police-community interaction. Cartwright and Shaw (2020) found that some participants who followed their local police service on social media reported that doing so had influenced or changed their opinion of the service. This highlights the possibility that social media affordances can significantly shape police-community relations, as they may affect users' emotions, thoughts, and behaviours. According to Treem and Leonardi (2013), social media has made it possible for behaviours, information, and interactions previously invisible or difficult to observe to become visible to others. This increased visibility may also lead individuals to feel that they are being monitored, which can influence their intention to cooperate with the police.

The personal information we share on social media makes people visible through data (Taylor, 2017). Social media affordances are likely to influence individuals' perceptions of data justice. For instance, social media, a key platform for surveillance thanks to the affordance of visibility, allows information to be collected through the monitoring of individuals, which may affect individuals' perceptions of data justice. As Lyon (2014) and Ansorge (2016) argue, the actions of social media users are transformed into data, quantified, and classified. In this context, society is increasingly organised around collecting, storing, analysing, and applying data by state institutions and private platforms through digital technologies. People generally expect honesty, impartiality, and equality in how data is handled. Given that social media contributes to concerns about accountability and transparency (Dencik et al., 2015), it is reasonable to expect that it may significantly influence perceptions of data justice.

It is possible to direct and control the behaviour of individuals in social networks. Badouard et al. (2016) suggest that algorithms define the framework within which users act online. Although it seems that personal freedom is created within social networking sites through algorithms, the context and limits of individual freedom are drawn (Törnberg & Uitermark, 2020). Because algorithmic influence is often difficult to detect, individuals may not always be fully aware of how their behaviour is being guided (Schuilenburg & Peeters, 2021). For instance, the visibility created by social media enables institutions such as the police to monitor citizens' activities and gather personal information more easily (Trottier & Fuchs, 2015). This may be beyond the individual's control, and those who are aware of it may regulate their behaviour more carefully. It is, therefore, hypothesised that:

H11: (a) Visibility, (b) interaction, (c) association, and (d) persistence affordances mediate the effect of perceived surveillance on social media on intention to cooperate with the police.

H12: (a) Visibility, (b) interaction, (c) association, and (d) persistence affordances mediate the effect of perceived control on social media on intention to cooperate with the police.

H13: (a) Visibility, (b) interaction, (c) association, and (d) persistence affordances mediate the effect of perceived data justice on social media on intention to cooperate with the police.

Perceived control is related to the ability of individuals to determine their behaviours and posts and what kind of content will be visible to whom in digital environments. As defined in this study, individuals' perceptions of control over who will see the information they provide on social media platforms, keeping their content private, or shaping their online behaviours directly affect their areas of action in this environment. It is stated in the literature that individuals' higher perception of control in their social media use increases their sense of autonomy and empowerment (e.g. Brandimarte et al., 2013; Trepte, 2021). Therefore, it is assumed that individuals who perceive themselves to be in control on social media will also have higher perceptions of digital

efficacy because individuals who feel that they can set their boundaries and manage their content can participate more confidently and effectively in digital environments.

The literature on perceived surveillance in digital environments points to mixed effects on factors that are related to digital efficacy. In Takagi et al. (2022), people who are more aware of security cameras report higher social trust but a weaker sense of cohesion in their neighbourhoods. Walsh and O'Connor (2019) argue that social media simultaneously expand police surveillance capacities and enable citizens to build connections, communities, and collective action in digital environments. Stoycheff (2016) found that the feeling of being monitored may discourage people from expressing minority views online. This finding suggests that the feeling of being monitored may create reservations among individuals regarding freedom of expression or collective participation on social media. In this context, perceived surveillance on social media may negatively affect digital efficacy.

Social media affordances, such as the ability to share and organise information, can positively contribute to digital efficacy by empowering individuals to take collective action. These affordances enable users to coordinate and mobilise online; for instance, visibility enhances the reach of users' actions and content. However, the same affordances also increase users' exposure to surveillance. For instance, visibility can enable police to monitor behaviours and share opinions more easily. These dual functions of affordances can have contrasting impacts depending on contextual factors such as perceived surveillance and concerns over data privacy. Online tracking and data collection can have a chilling effect on individuals' online behaviour (McDonald & Cranor, 2010). Individuals who believe the police use social media data unfairly are less likely to feel empowered and thus may not develop a strong sense of digital efficacy. This is because affordances, while enabling participation, also facilitate extensive data collection by authorities, making individuals more knowable (Goldsmith, 2015). Strauß (2015) found that individuals are highly concerned that too much personal data is collected and that it may be misused or shared without their permission. As a result, when people perceive that their data is used unjustly or discriminatively, they may choose not to share content or engage in group activities,

ultimately weakening digital efficacy. In light of these considerations, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H14: (a) Perceived surveillance on social media has a negative direct effect on digital efficacy, (b) perceived control on social media has a positive direct effect on digital efficacy, and (c) perceived data justice on social media has a positive direct effect on digital efficacy.

H15: (a) Visibility, (b) interaction, (c) association, and (d) persistence affordances mediate the effects of perceived surveillance, perceived control, and perceived data justice on social media on digital efficacy.

3.2.3.2.2. Self-Censorship on Social Media

Although social media applications offer customisation features that allow users to share content or restrict access to it selectively, these affordances do not eliminate self-censorship. Self-censorship refers to the deliberate withholding, editing, or softening of one's views, reactions, or online behaviour in anticipation of possible consequences. Penney (2016) suggests that increased government surveillance can encourage online self-censorship, particularly by discouraging access to privacy-sensitive information. Much of the existing research has been conducted outside the UK, and there remains a notable lack of studies focused on the UK context. For example, Warner and Wang (2019) found that higher privacy concerns are associated with greater self-censorship on social networking sites, as individuals increasingly withhold or edit what they post online. Self-censorship could be triggered by fears of surveillance and data misuse and can inhibit users' intentions and attitudes on social media platforms.

Stoycheff (2016) shows that when people are reminded of government Internet surveillance, they become less willing to express minority political views on Facebook, indicating a chilling effect on online political discussion. However, Sæbø et al. (2020) emphasise that social media can support collective action by making it easier for users to share content, join discussions, and coordinate joint action. When individuals can speak openly, share content, and participate in collective initiatives, they may demonstrate what this study terms digital efficacy.

Even though using social media data can enhance policing efforts in crime prevention, it may also contribute to discriminatory practices and reinforce social inequalities (Aston et al., 2022). Individuals may resort to self-censorship when they believe that data collected by the police from social media is being used unethically or unfairly. A low level of perceived data fairness can be expected to negatively impact police-community cooperation, and self-censorship can exacerbate this effect. Factors such as perceived surveillance, doubts about the fairness of the data-collection process, and concerns about the misuse of personal data may lead individuals to restrict their behaviour or online expression.

Policing technologies such as algorithms, big data, and surveillance may contribute to self-censorship. As Lyon (2017) suggests, surveillance has become embedded in everyday life and can affect how individuals respond to being monitored. In this context, individuals may become more cautious about what they say and do online and may avoid expressing their views openly. By limiting expression and participation, self-censorship may reduce intention to cooperate with the police and may also weaken digital efficacy. It is, therefore, hypothesised that:

H16: Self-censorship on social media mediates the effects of (a) perceived control, (b) perceived surveillance, and (c) perceived data justice on social media on intention to cooperate with the police.

H17: Self-censorship on social media mediates the effects of (a) perceived control, (b) perceived surveillance, and (c) perceived data justice on social media on digital efficacy.

The second model aims to reveal the direct and indirect effects of digital control mechanisms on police-community cooperation. Based on the literature review and the formulated hypotheses, the following model illustrates the relationships among these constructs, police cooperation, and digital efficacy.

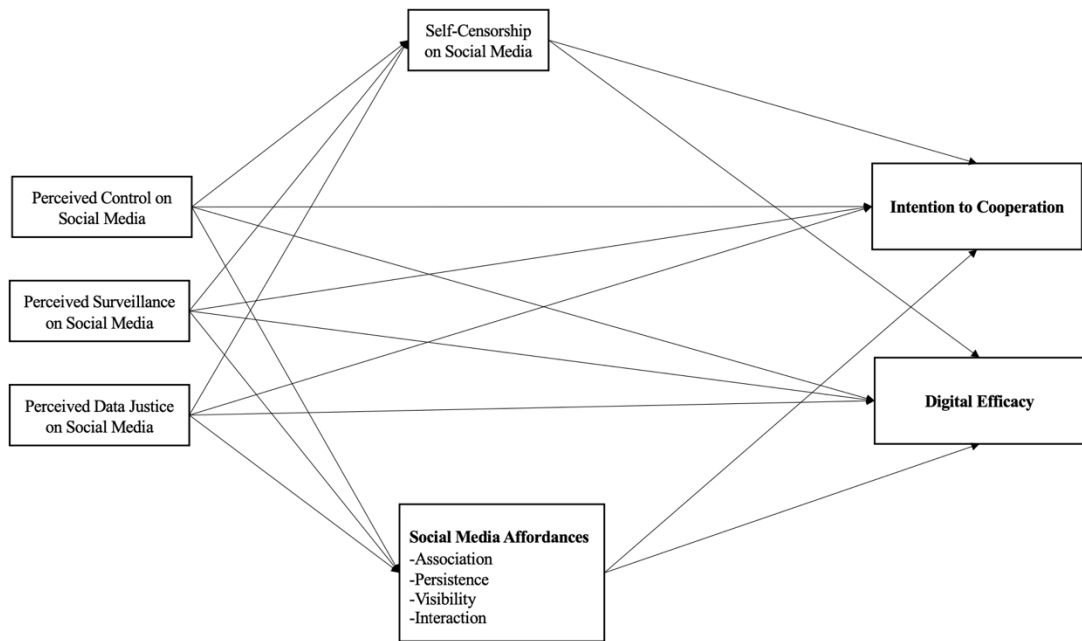


Figure 2. Digital Control Mechanisms and Police Cooperation Model

CHAPTER 4: METHOD

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological design of the study. Since the research explores perceptions and intentions regarding policing and social media, a survey design was adopted. The chapter describes the development of the survey items, the data collection process, and the analytical steps taken to validate the constructs and test the structural models. It also explains the rationale behind the research design and addresses the ethical issues involved in studying potentially sensitive topics such as policing, surveillance, and self-censorship.

4.1.1. Methodological Rationale and Research Design Reflections

This study examined perceptions and intentions rather than directly observable behaviour. For that reason, survey data formed the basis of the analysis. The main constructs in the study, such as trust, procedural justice, perceived control, self-censorship, and digital efficacy, were measured through multi-item scales and analysed as latent constructs. These variables could not be adequately captured by single indicators.

EFA and CFA contributed to the assessment of the measurement structure, while SEM enabled the examination of direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The decision to organise the study around two separate structural models reflected both conceptual and analytical considerations. The first model focused on the relationships between perceptions of policing and intention to cooperate with the police. The second model examined the relationships between digital control mechanisms in the social media context and their effects on intention to cooperate with the police and digital efficacy. The two models were separated to distinguish between evaluations of policing as an institution and perceptions of digital control mechanisms in social media environments. This distinction helped to test the research questions more clearly and to keep the conceptual scope manageable. Social media affordances and self-censorship were positioned as mediating variables to examine how particular perceptions might influence intention to cooperate with the police and digital efficacy.

The research design was also shaped by ethical and methodological concerns. Given that the study addressed sensitive issues such as policing, surveillance, and self-censorship, care was taken with the wording of the questionnaire and how participants might interpret its items.

4.2. Item Development

This section explains how the measurement items used in the study were adapted from existing scales and, where necessary, newly developed.

4.2.1. Measures of Police–Community Perceptions: Perceived Trust, Effectiveness, Legitimacy, Procedural Justice, and Intention to Cooperate with the Police

For the police to succeed, they need the community’s cooperation. Without the cooperation of citizens, police are limited in what they can do to solve crimes, maintain order, or prevent crime (Rosenbaum et al., 2005). As discussed in relevant sections, existing studies have revealed a relationship between trust in the police, legitimacy, procedural justice, police effectiveness, and cooperation (e.g., Hough et al., 2013; Jackson et al., 2012a). Studies have focused on perceptions of policing in physical spaces (including face-to-face encounters). Studies have focused on perceptions of policing in physical spaces, particularly during face-to-face encounters. However, this study re-evaluates these perceptions and consequences towards the police in the context of social media. An important starting point of this research is that the police, who are aware of how vital a tool social media is, make themselves visible in this medium and increase their potential to interact with society.

The scale developed by Sunshine and Tyler (2003) was used to measure perceived trust in the police. However, some items might lead to confusion, as they could also be interpreted as reflecting perceptions of police effectiveness. For instance, the item “I am proud of the work of the police” may be seen as assessing performance rather than trust. Five items that directly capture trust were selected from the original scale to avoid ambiguity and ensure a more explicit focus on trust. The 4-item scale for perceived procedural justice, created by Nix et al. (2015) using the latest reviews of the process-based policing model, was adapted to the UK context, and the researcher

added the phrase “The local police forces may treat some citizens differently based on their personal characteristics” and became a 5-item scale in total. The 4-item scale designed by Hinds and Murphy (2007) for perceived police legitimacy was adapted to the UK context. An additional item, “I am very satisfied with services provided by local police forces” was included to enhance content coverage and contextual relevance. To measure the perception of how effective the police are, a scale with five items was designed using the scales adapted by Jackson and Bradford (2019) and Murhpy and McPherson (2022). Finally, Jackson and Bradford’s (2019) 5-item scale was adapted to the UK context to measure individuals’ intention to cooperate with the police. The validity and reliability of these scales have been tested in the same studies and used and tested in other studies.

Table 1 shows the perceived trust, effectiveness, legitimacy and procedural justice measures used in the research.

Table 1. Trust, Effectiveness, Legitimacy, Procedural Justice and Police Cooperation Intention Measures

Construct	Items
Perceived Police Trust	<p>I trust the leaders of the local police forces to make decisions that are good for everyone in the country.</p> <p>The local police forces can be relied on to be there when you need them.</p> <p>The local police forces well protect people’s basic rights.</p> <p>The local police forces care about the well-being of everyone they deal with.</p> <p>There are many things about the local police forces and its policies that need to be changed.</p>
Perceived Police Effectiveness	<p>Local police forces are effective at resolving violent crimes.</p> <p>Local police forces are effective at resolving property crimes.</p> <p>Local police forces are effective at responding quickly to calls for assistance.</p> <p>Local police forces are effective at keeping the community safe.</p> <p>Local police forces are effective at deterring criminals.</p>
Perceived Police Legitimacy	<p>Local police forces do their job well.</p> <p>I have confidence in the local police forces</p> <p>I have great respect for the local police forces</p> <p>People should always follow the directions of local police officers even if they go against what they think is right.</p> <p>I am very satisfied with services provided by local police forces</p>

Construct	Items
Perceived Police Procedural Justice	<p>Local police forces treat citizens with respect.</p> <p>Local police forces take the time to listen to people.</p> <p>Local police forces treat people fairly.</p> <p>Local police forces explain their decisions to the people they deal with.</p> <p>The local police forces may treat some citizens differently based on their personal characteristics.</p>
Police Cooperation Intention	<p>I would help the local police forces if asked.</p> <p>I would call the local police forces for assistance.</p> <p>I would call the local police forces to report a crime.</p> <p>I would report suspicious activities to the local police forces</p> <p>I would help the local police forces by giving evidence in court.</p>

4.2.2. Measures of Digital Perceptions

This section presents the measures used for perceived surveillance, perceived control, perceived data justice, self-censorship and digital efficacy.

4.2.2.1. Perceived Surveillance on Social Media

In this study, perceived surveillance on social media is measured as a general perception of being monitored on social media platforms, rather than surveillance by a single specific actor. The measure reflects beliefs that social media is a surveillance environment in which users' actions can be observed and recorded by platforms, organisations, or other individuals. To measure how individuals perceive surveillance on social media, three items were adapted from Ip's (2013) measure of perceived online surveillance and reworded for the social media context. For example, "Most of the Internet users believe they are or have ever been surveilled online" was reworded as "Most users believe they have been subject to surveillance on social media." Additionally, two items were added to better reflect perceived surveillance: "I consider social media to be a surveillance environment" and "I believe that social media collects a lot of information by monitoring users' actions."

4.2.2.2. Perceived Control on Social Media

Perceived control on social media in the study is defined as individuals' belief that they can manage what information they share, who can see it and how they behave on

social media, including the extent to which privacy settings and platform tools allow them to set boundaries around their personal data and visibility. To measure individuals' perceived control on social media, three items from Krasnova et al.'s (2010) perceived control scale were adapted and reworded for the social media context. Additionally, to better measure perceived control on social media, two items were added: "I believe I have control over how I behave on social media" and "My personal information cannot be made available to unknown persons or institutions on social media without my consent."

4.2.2.3. Perceived Data Justice on Social Media

Social media and big data play an essential role in the government and its institutions, for example, predicting and controlling problems. However, technology is not neutral and becomes a significant force, especially when organisations with authority use force and restrict freedom. Although using big data positively affects policing in crime prevention, it may also lead to increased discriminatory practices or inequalities (Aston et al., 2022). The increasing role of data in governance created through new technologies makes data justice more important (Metcalf & Dencik, 2019). For instance, Williams and Kind (2019), which includes the UK, argue that surveillance and analysis technologies are subject to excessive control over minority groups and communities relative to other people in society. Therefore, understanding data justice perceptions is important for this study.

To measure individuals' perceptions of data justice, a literature review was first conducted to create an item pool. For this purpose, studies in the literature (Aston et al., 2022; Dencik & Sanchez-Monedero, 2022; Dencik et al., 2019; Williams & Kind, 2019; Dencik et al., 2018; Just, and Latzer, 2017; Dencik et al., 2015; Big Brother Watch, 2019; Big Brother Watch, 2017) were examined in detail, and certain features of the data justice concept were tried to be clustered. As a result, five original items were introduced. For example, "The use of data obtained through social media is greater for minority groups and communities" and "I do not believe that data obtained through social media is used only to reduce crime rates or prevent crime."

4.2.2.4. Self-Censorship on Social Media

Although social media platforms offer users customizable settings, they are likely to self-censor for many reasons. For this study, the 8-item scale adapted by Kwon et al. (2015) revealed the antecedents and consequences of self-censorship. However, since these items address a specific social media platform (Facebook), they have been generalised and adapted to social media. For example, the phrase “On Facebook, it is difficult for me to express my opinion if I think others won’t agree with what I post” is arranged as “On social media, it is difficult for me to express my opinion if I think others won’t agree with what I post.”

4.2.2.5. Digital Efficacy

Collective efficacy describes the extent to which residents in a community feel connected and responsible for their neighbourhood, sharing common bonds and trusting one another enough to act together (Kochel & Weisburd, 2019). Today, many communities and social networks form and operate in digital environments, while research on collective efficacy still focuses mainly on place-based neighbourhoods. In response to this gap, this study draws on the concept of collective efficacy to develop digital efficacy for social media settings. In this study, digital efficacy is defined as individuals’ belief that they and other social media users can use social media to deal with problems, support one another and act together around shared concerns. There is currently no scale in the literature specifically designed to measure digital efficacy. At this point, we drew on and adapted the 8-item collective efficacy scale used by Yesberg et al. (2023). Because the original scale items were designed for a physical neighbourhood context, some items were removed, while others were adapted or newly developed to capture digital efficacy in the context of social media. For example, the integrative nature of a digital context was emphasised by adding the items “When I encounter any problem, I can engage in dialogue with other users on social media, even if I do not know them” and “I can collaborate with others on social media by joining groups that share my goals or interests.”

Table 2 shows the Perceived Surveillance, Perceived Control, Perceived Data Justice, Self-censorship and Digital Efficacy measures used in the research.

Table 2. Perceived Surveillance, Perceived Control, Perceived Data Justice, Self-Censorship and Digital Efficacy Measures

Construct	Items
Perceived Surveillance on Social Media	<p>I personally believe I have been subject to surveillance on social media.</p> <p>Most users believe they have been subject to surveillance on social media.</p> <p>Some organizations or individuals acknowledge that they have conducted surveillance on social media users.</p> <p>I consider social media to be a surveillance environment.</p> <p>I believe that social media collects a lot of information by monitoring users' actions.</p>
Perceived Control on Social Media	<p>I feel in control over the information I provide on social media.</p> <p>Privacy settings allow me to have full control over the information I provide on social media.</p> <p>I feel in control of who can view my information on social media.</p> <p>I believe I have control over how I behave on social media.</p> <p>My personal information cannot be made available to unknown persons or institutions on social media without my consent.</p>
Perceived Data Justice on Social Media	<p>Data obtained through social media is used ethically.</p> <p>I do not believe that data obtained through social media is used fairly for everyone.</p> <p>The use of data obtained through social media is greater for minority groups and communities.</p> <p>I do not believe that data obtained through social media is used only to reduce crime rates or prevent crime.</p> <p>The large amount of data obtained through social media affects the transparency of the data.</p>
Self-censorship on Social Media	<p>On social media, it is difficult for me to express my opinion if I think others won't agree with what I post.</p> <p>On social media, there have been many times when I have thought others in my social networks were wrong, but I didn't let them know.</p> <p>On social media, when I disagree with others' opinions, I'd rather go along with them than argue about it.</p> <p>On social media, it is easy for me to express my opinion around others who I think will disagree with me.</p> <p>On social media, I get uncomfortable when who disagrees with me asks my opinion on a topic.</p> <p>On social media, I tend to speak my opinion only around friends or other people I trust.</p> <p>On social media, it is safer to keep quiet than publicly speak an opinion that you know most others don't share.</p> <p>On social media, if I disagree with others, I have no problem letting them know.</p>

Construct	Items
Digital Efficacy	<p>Social media is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.</p> <p>Social media users have control over the social media.</p> <p>If I encounter any problems in the area I live in, I can ask for help on social media.</p> <p>If there is any suspicious post on social media, you can trust that social media users will contact the local police forces.</p> <p>If users cause problems on social media, other users will warn them.</p> <p>When I encounter any problem, I can engage in dialogue with other users on social media, even if I do not know them.</p> <p>I can collaborate with others on social media by joining groups that share my goals or interests.</p>

4.2.3. Measures of Social Media Affordances: Persistence, Visibility, Association, Interaction

In this study, social media affordances are conceptualised and tested as the structural possibilities that platforms offer users, including interaction, visibility, and association. By contrast, social media content refers to the posts, messages and comments produced by users. The survey items asked participants to evaluate the extent to which they experienced these structural possibilities, rather than their engagement with particular pieces of content. Therefore, the affordance constructs in this study capture participants' perceptions of these platform-level possibilities, rather than content characteristics. In this regard, interaction, visibility, persistence, and association affordances were examined in the study. The 3-item scale for visibility affordance adapted by Yang and Zhang (2022) was expanded by adding two new items: "I can see other people's content, dialogues or comments on social media" and "Social media allows me and other users to be seen and noticed by a wider community." These additions were made to broaden the scale's content coverage and strengthen its relevance to this study's context. The persistence and association affordance items were also adapted from Yang and Zhang's (2022) social media affordance scale to reflect users' perceptions of the durability of social media content and the relational connections enabled by social media. Finally, two items were adapted from Lin and Chang's (2018) perceived interactivity measure and were

complemented by two additional items to better reflect the context of this study. For instance, “Thanks to social media, I can directly interact with any brand or corporation.”

Table 3. Persistence, Visibility, Association, Interaction Measures

Construct	Items
Perceived Persistence	<p>I can find the information previously posted on social media.</p> <p>The information or comments I post on social media can always be retained.</p> <p>I can keep in touch with my friends on social media, even though their jobs and locations have changed.</p> <p>Even when I am not active on social media, other users can comment or share the post.</p>
Perceived Visibility	<p>I can see dialogues or comments between friends on social media.</p> <p>I can see how my friends interact or connect with each other on social media.</p> <p>I can see how many people like the same content as me on social media.</p> <p>I can see other people’s content, dialogues or comments on social media.</p> <p>Social media allows me and other users to be seen and noticed by a wider community.</p>
Perceived Association	<p>I can meet new friends through my friends on social media.</p> <p>I can use my previous posts on social media to discover new interactions or content.</p> <p>I can easily keep in touch with people I rarely meet through social media.</p> <p>Social media can suggest new and relevant content or users based on the user’s profile or activity.</p>
Perceived Interaction	<p>I can easily communicate with others by using social media.</p> <p>I can easily exchange and share opinions with others by using social media.</p> <p>I can comment on other users’ posts using social media.</p> <p>Thanks to social media, I can directly interact with any brand or institution.</p>

The survey included preliminary demographic questions covering gender, age, ethnicity, and country of residence. Participants first answered preliminary demographic questions (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, country of residence).

4.3. Data Collection

The Prolific research platform was used to help researchers find the participants wanted, manage their data collection, and collect data from a more diverse representative sample. For this purpose, data was collected from the Prolific platform

via Qualtrics, one of the survey creation tools. Data was collected from 50 participants for the pre-test and 440 participants for the main survey.

4.3.1. Pre-test

In the first stage, data were collected from 50 participants to assess the reliability and validity of the finalised scales. Since responding to each item was mandatory, no missing data were observed. As shown in Table 5, the pre-test sample consisted of 50 respondents. Women made up 72% of the sample and men 26.6%. The most common age group was 31–40 years (28%). Regarding ethnicity, 96% of respondents identified as White. In addition, 78% reported living in England.

Table 4. Frequencies and Percentages: Pre-test (*N* = 50)

		N	%
Gender	Male	13	26
	Female	36	72
	Prefer not to say	1	2
Age	18-30	13	26
	31-40	14	28
	41-50	9	18
	51-60	5	10
	61+	9	18
Ethnicity	White (e.g., English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish, Irish, Other White background)	48	96
	Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups (e.g., White and Black Caribbean, White and Asian, Other Mixed background)	2	4
Country	England	39	78
	Scotland	5	10
	Wales	5	10
	Northern Ireland	1	2
Social media usage	less than 1 hour	13	26
	1-2 hours	20	40
	2-3 hours	10	20
	more than 3 hours	7	14

4.3.1.1. Internal Consistency

It was checked whether each variable used in the research met the assumption of normal distribution. The fact that Skewness and Kurtosis values are within the expected values confirms the normality of the variables. The skewness value is an indicator of the symmetry of the distribution. Kurtosis provides information about the peak of the distribution (Pallant, 2016). Table 5 shows that the skewness and kurtosis values are acceptable between -2 and +2 (George & Mallery, 2022). Therefore, the data can be considered approximately normally distributed. Table 5 presents each construct's means, standard deviations and skewness-kurtosis values.

The assumption of multivariate normality and the control of extreme values were evaluated with the Mahalanobis distance, a statistical indicator. Thus, no data was found above the threshold value (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012) in the chi-square critical values table ($p < .001$) regarding Mahalanobis distance. Therefore, the data obtained provides univariate and multivariate normality for the tests to be used. Cronbach's alpha is the reliability coefficient that evaluates the consistency of the entire scale and is the most widely used measure. For this reason, Cronbach's alpha was applied to each construct used in the research. As a result of the Cronbach's alpha analysis (see Table 5), the constructs provide internal consistency.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency ($N = 50$)

Constructs	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
Perceived Police Trust	3.01	.906	-.648	-.425	.89
Perceived Procedural Justice	3.10	.809	-.632	.569	.85
Perceived Police Legitimacy	3.31	.908	-.571	-.150	.89
Perceived Police Effectiveness	2.84	.946	-.202	-.573	.89
Police Cooperation Intention	3.90	.591	-.547	.814	.72
Perceived Persistence	4.14	.555	.074	-.692	.74
Perceived Visibility	4.06	.610	-.381	.661	.86
Perceived Association	3.70	.711	-.313	.138	.74
Perceived Interaction	4.13	.629	-.525	.155	.81
Perceived Surveillance on Social Media	3.46	.870	-.387	.218	.86

Constructs	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
Perceived Control on Social Media	3.51	.782	-.405	-.134	.77
Perceived Data Justice on Social Media	2.61	.583	.989	1.690	.56
Digital Efficacy	3.38	.551	-.073	1.033	.65
Self-Censorship on Social Media	3.36	.647	-.784	.553	.79

4.3.2. Main Survey

This subsection presents the survey sample characteristics and internal consistency of the measures.

4.3.2.1. Sample and Internal Consistency

Data was collected from 440 participants for the main survey. However, before starting the analyses, it was checked whether each variable used in the research met the assumption of normal distribution. The fact that Skewness and Kurtosis values are within the expected values confirms the normality of the variables. The skewness value is an indicator of the symmetry of the distribution. Kurtosis provides information about the peak of the distribution (Pallant, 2016). Table 6 shows that the skewness and kurtosis values are acceptable between -2 and +2 (George and Mallery, 2022). Structures exceeding these values were checked for outliers to identify which data disrupted the normal distribution, and therefore, 6 data were removed. After this, the analysis was repeated, and it was seen that the data was normally distributed. Table 6 also presents each construct's means, standard deviations and skewness-kurtosis values. The assumption of multivariate normality and the control of extreme values were evaluated with the Mahalanobis distance, a statistical indicator. Therefore, 13 cases above the Mahalanobis threshold value (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012) were found in the Chi-square critical values table ($p < .001$). The data of 13 participants were deleted. The data from 421 participants provide univariate and multivariate normality for the tests to be used.

Reliability is an assessment of the degree of consistency between multiple variable measurements. Reliability analyses of each variable in the study were conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Accordingly, it was concluded that all variables except

perceived data justice ($\alpha = .55$) had acceptable reliability values (Hair et al., 2019). Perceived data justice was excluded from further analysis because it did not provide sufficient internal consistency. Descriptive statistics and internal consistency values for the variables discussed are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency: Main Survey ($N = 421$)

Constructs	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
Perceived Police Trust	3.03	.839	-.415	-.340	.88
Perceived Procedural Justice	3.06	.771	-.450	-.043	.86
Perceived Police Legitimacy	3.34	.873	-.417	-.298	.90
Perceived Police Effectiveness	2.86	.865	-.272	-.532	.88
Police Cooperation Intention	3.98	.626	-.506	.728	.83
Perceived Persistence	4.12	.521	-.173	-.316	.73
Perceived Visibility	4.06	.543	-.124	.499	.82
Perceived Association	3.07	.486	-.296	.303	.71
Perceived Interaction	4.19	.539	-.278	.322	.82
Perceived Surveillance on Social Media	3.54	.691	-.277	.171	.77
Perceived Control on Social Media	3.35	.712	-.167	-.259	.76
Perceived Data Justice on Social Media	2.49	.500	.067	.386	.55
Digital Efficacy	3.21	.543	-.264	.358	.69
Self-Censorship on Social Media	3.31	.636	-.409	.618	.82

Table 7 presents the demographic distribution of the main survey participants. Accordingly, 66.7% of the participants were women, while 32.3% were men. Additionally, the largest segment of the participants' age range is the 31-40 age range, with 32.8%. Regarding ethnicity, 86.9% of participants identified as White. In terms of country of residence, the majority of participants were from England (82.7%).

Table 7. Demographic Details of Participants: Main Survey ($N = 421$)

		N	%
Gender	Male	136	32.3
	Female	281	66.7
	Non-binary	3	.7
	Prefer not to say	1	.2

		N	%
Age	18-30	119	28.3
	31-40	138	32.8
	41-50	83	19.7
	51-60	52	12.4
	61+	29	6.9
Ethnicity	White (e.g., English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish, Irish, Other White background)	366	86.9
	Black or Black British (e.g., African, Caribbean, Other Black background)	18	4.3
	Asian or Asian British (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other Asian background)	25	5.9
	Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups (e.g., White and Black Caribbean, White and Asian, Other Mixed background)	9	2.1
	Other ethnic group (please specify)	2	.5
	I prefer not to disclose my ethnicity.	1	.2
Country	England	348	82.7
	Scotland	40	9.5
	Wales	24	5.7
	Northern Ireland	9	2.1
Social media usage	less than 1 hour	65	15.4
	1-2 hours	153	36.3
	2-3 hours	98	23.3
	more than 3 hours	105	24.9

4.3.3. Ethical and Methodological Considerations

Data collection required careful attention to ethics and participant sensitivity. As the study addressed potentially sensitive topics, such as policing and surveillance, some participants may have been more cautious in their responses. For this reason, the questionnaire was designed to minimise pressure and support clear, comfortable participation.

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Strathclyde prior to data collection, and the survey was designed to support informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and secure data handling. Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Item wording was carefully reviewed to ensure that it did not contain leading, intrusive, or judgmental language. Policing, surveillance, and self-censorship may have been perceived as sensitive by some participants. The research design considered how participants might interpret the questions and the degree of comfort they would have in responding.

Another issue concerns the relative abstraction of some concepts. For example, although the concept of data justice was reflected in the survey items, it may not have been understood in the same way by all participants. The questionnaire was therefore designed to balance conceptual precision with ease of understanding. Even so, the use of survey measures for complex digital issues can still result in differences in interpretation among participants.

4.4. Data Analysis

This section outlines the data analysis procedures. Phase I identifies and assesses latent constructs using EFA and CFA for policing perceptions, social media affordances and digital perceptions. Phase II tests the two structural models (Model I and Model II) and then reports independent-samples t tests, ANOVA, and the SEM.

4.4.1. PHASE I: Identification and Assessment of Latent Constructs

Three exploratory factor analyses (EFA) were conducted to identify the best items to measure constructs representing each variable, evaluate the variables' structure and their potential to form composite measures or provide an empirical basis for selecting a subset of representative variables for further analysis. In EFA, the maximum likelihood method was used, as it produces the best statistical results and directly predicts interaction effects and the variables will be tested with the structural equation model in further analysis (Hair et al., 2019; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). However, since it is thought that there is a relationship between variables due to the nature of the structure, the Promax rotation technique, which is the most preferred rotation process when it comes to the relationship between factors, was preferred (Hair et al., 2019).

Factor loadings, which are coefficients that explain the relationships of items in a scale with the factor, should generally have a value greater than .50 (Hair et al., 2019). Therefore, items with low factor loadings ($\leq .50$) and cross-loadings were removed, and EFA was repeated until an acceptable result was reached.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) allows for testing of how well the measured variables represent a set of theoretical latent constructs and validates the construct as a measurement model (Hair et al., 2019). Therefore, the findings resulting from EFAs were confirmed by CFA, which ensured a reasonable fit of a factor structure that included all constructs. Thus, the data was organised before the analysis, and the structural equation modelling assumptions were examined.

4.4.1.1. EFA and CFA: Policing Perceptions

Initially, EFA and CFA were conducted on the perceptions of policing, including the variables of perceived police trust, perceived procedural justice, perceived police legitimacy, perceived police effectiveness, and police cooperation. To reveal the suitability of the sample size in the study for EFA, Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted. The results showed that Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($< .001$) and the KMO sampling adequacy was .94. These results indicate that the sample size is at an excellent level of fit for EFA and that there is sufficient correlation among the variables (Hair et al., 2019). After ensuring the necessary conditions, items with low factor loadings ($\leq .50$) and cross-loadings were removed following the EFA, and the repeated EFA showed that the distribution of factor loadings was appropriately between .509 and .939 (Hair et al., 2019). The total variance explained was also 65.456, and each eigenvalue was above 1. The factor load distributions presented in Table 8 indicate perceived police trust, procedural justice, and legitimacy items loaded onto a single factor. The EFA did not support the identification of these variables as three separate factors. However, this does not weaken the validity of the constructs because perceived police trust, perceived legitimacy, and procedural justice are necessary conditions for each other. This finding indicates that participants did not distinguish between perceived police trust, perceived procedural justice, and perceived legitimacy in their assessments. Consequently, these constructs were considered as a single factor.

Table 8. Exploratory Factor Analysis: Policing Perceptions

Item	Factor		
	1	2	3
Procedural_justice_3	.937		
Procedural_justice_1	.858		
Police_Trust_4	.756		
Procedural_justice_2	.679		
Procedural_justice_4	.643		
Police_Legitimacy_3	.613		
Procedural_justice_5	.612		
Police_Trust_1	.612		
Police_Trust_5	.509		
Police_Effectiveness_4		.880	
Police_Effectiveness_3		.733	
Police_Effectiveness_5		.710	
Police_Effectiveness_2		.704	
Police_Effectiveness_1		.695	
Police_Cooperation_3			.939
Police_Cooperation_2			.848
Police_Cooperation_5			.667
Police_Cooperation_4			.590

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

In the next stage, CFA was performed to verify the structures based on the appropriate values obtained from EFA. As a result of CFA, one item with a low standardised regression weight ($\leq .50$) was removed to improve model fit further. Therefore, one item with a low standardised regression weight ($\leq .50$) was removed to improve model fit further. Consequently, the standardised regression coefficients for the items were found to be between .562 and .919, which is at a sufficient level ($\geq .50$) (Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, all items in the model were statistically significant ($p < .001$). In evaluating the fit indices after CFA, good or acceptable fit values and ranges, which are widely used in the literature, were considered (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012; Hair et al., 2019). The evaluation of fit indices following the CFA indicated that the model demonstrated acceptable goodness-of-fit: CMIN = 185.673, $\chi^2/df = 1.601$, CFI = .98,

TLI = .98, AGFI = .93, RMSEA = .03, SRMR = .03 (Hair et al., 2019; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Forza & Filippini, 1998; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012) (see Table 9).

Table 9. Policing Perceptions: Goodness-of-Fit index values

	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	AGFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model Fit	1.601	.98	.98	.93	.03	.03

Table 10. Policing Perceptions: Standardised Regression Weights

	Estimate
Procedural_justice_3	.863
Procedural_justice_1	.830
Police_Trust_4	.852
Procedural_justice_2	.824
Procedural_justice_4	.668
Police_Legitimacy_3	.803
Police_Trust_1	.789
Police_Trust_5	.562
Police_Effectiveness_4	.919
Police_Effectiveness_3	.742
Police_Effectiveness_5	.770
Police_Effectiveness_2	.656
Police_Effectiveness_1	.782
Police_Cooperation_3	.881
Police_Cooperation_2	.832
Police_Cooperation_5	.649
Police_Cooperation_4	.628

Model Fit: χ^2 : 185.673, df:116, $p \leq .001$, CFI: .98 TLI: .98, AGFI: .93, RMSEA: .03, SRMR:.03

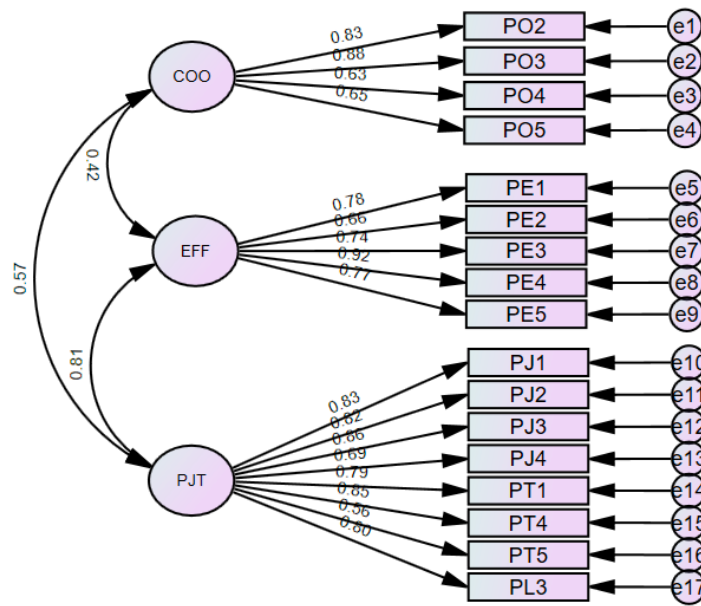


Figure 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Policing Perceptions Constructs

4.4.1.2. EFA and CFA: Social Media Affordances

This EFA and CFA were carried out to verify social media affordances' visibility, association, persistence and interaction structures. The results of Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which were conducted to reveal the suitability of the sample size in the study for EFA, were found to be significant, and the KMO sampling adequacy was .83. Additionally, the total variance explained was 70.071, and each eigenvalue was above 1. As a result of EFA, items with low factor loadings ($\leq .50$) and cross-loadings were removed. With repeated EFA, factor loadings were found to be at an appropriate level between .571 and .845 (Hair et al., 2019). However, persistence items had high cross-loadings and low factor loadings and were removed to improve the factor solution. Thus, this model proposes three latent factors to measure social media affordances.

Table 11. Exploratory Factor Analysis: Social Media Affordances

Item	Factor		
	1	2	3
Visibility_1	.845		
Visibility_2	.756		
Visibility_4	.657		
Visibility_3	.571		
Interaction_2		.833	
Interaction_3		.763	
Interaction_1		.744	
Association_1			.635
Association_2			.597

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

In the next stage, CFA was performed to verify these structures based on the appropriate values obtained from EFA. As a result of CFA, it was observed that the standardised regression coefficients for the items were between .563 and .830 and were at a sufficient level ($\geq .50$) (Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, all items in the model were statistically significant ($p < .001$). The evaluation of fit indices following the CFA indicated that the model demonstrated acceptable goodness-of-fit: CMIN = 88.388, $\chi^2/df = 3.683$, CFI = .95, TLI = .93, AGFI = .90, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .04 (Hair et al., 2019; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Forza & Filippini, 1998; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012) (see Table 12).

Table 12. Social Media Affordances: Goodness-of-Fit Index Values

	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	AGFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model Fit	3.683	.95	.93	.90	.04	.08

Table 13. Social Media Affordances: Standardised Regression Weights

	Estimate
Visibility_1	.830
Visibility_2	.781
Visibility_4	.650
Visibility_3	.563
Interaction_2	.815
Interaction_3	.794
Interaction_1	.822
Association_1	.617
Association_2	.718

Model Fit: χ^2 : 88.388, df:24, $p \leq .001$, CFI: .95 TLI: .93, AGFI: .90, RMSEA: .08, SRMR: .04

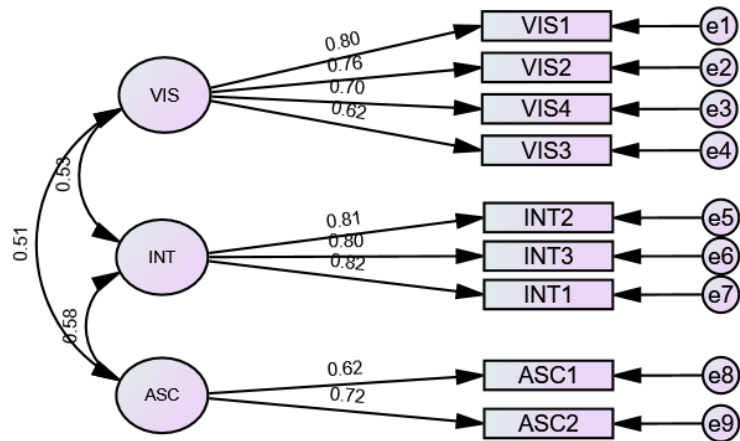


Figure 4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Social Media Affordance Constructs

4.4.1.3. EFA and CFA: Digital Perceptions

Ultimately, EFA and CFA were performed to verify the constructs of perceived surveillance, perceived control, perceived data justice, self-censorship and digital efficacy. It was found that the results of Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were significant, and the KMO sampling adequacy was .79. Additionally, the total variance explained was 57.086, and each eigenvalue was above 1. After EFA, items with low factor loadings ($\leq .50$) and cross-loadings were removed and repeated

EFA showed that the factor loadings were at an appropriate level between .503 and .877 (Hair et al., 2019). Only one item related to digital efficacy was preserved, considering that despite its low loading, it had a higher loading than the other extracted items and that three items, in particular, helped functionalise the structure. It was preserved despite the low loading because it could allow for more changes in the CFA.

Table 14. Exploratory Factor Analysis: Digital Perceptions

Item	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
Self_Censorship_8	.711			
Self_Censorship_7	.701			
Self_Censorship_1	.638			
Self_Censorship_4	.637			
Self_Censorship_6	.589			
Self_Censorship_5	.569			
Self_Censorship_3	.534			
Self_Censorship_2	.503			
Perceived_Control_2		.877		
Perceived_Control_3		.766		
Perceived_Control_1		.663		
Perceived_Control_5		.560		
Perceived_Surveillance_2			.867	
Perceived_Surveillance_1			.838	
Perceived_Surveillance_4			.511	
Digital_Efficacy_6				.774
Digital_Efficacy_7				.598
Digital_Efficacy_5				.474

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

In the final stage, CFA was performed to verify these structures. As a result of CFA, it was seen that the standardised regression coefficients for the items were between .512 and .826 and were at a sufficient level ($\geq .50$) (Hair et al., 2019). Besides, all items in the model were statistically significant ($p < .001$). The evaluation of fit indices following the CFA indicated that the model demonstrated acceptable goodness-of-fit: CMIN = 292.399, $\chi^2/df = 2.267$, CFI = .92, TLI = .91, AGFI = .90, RMSEA = .05,

SRMR = .05 (Hair et al., 2019; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Forza & Filippini, 1998; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012) (see Table 15).

Table 15. Digital Perceptions: Goodness-of-Fit Index Values

	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	AGFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model Fit	2.267	.92	.91	.90	.05	.05

Table 16. Digital Perceptions: Standardised Regression Weights

	Estimate
Self_Censorship_8	.658
Self_Censorship_7	.723
Self_Censorship_1	.627
Self_Censorship_4	.524
Self_Censorship_6	.594
Self_Censorship_5	.588
Self_Censorship_3	.561
Self_Censorship_2	.512
Perceived_Control_2	.826
Perceived_Control_3	.803
Perceived_Control_1	.680
Perceived_Control_5	.578
Perceived_Surveillance_2	.832
Perceived_Surveillance_1	.848
Perceived_Surveillance_4	.571
Digital_Efficacy_6	.738
Digital_Efficacy_7	.574
Digital_Efficacy_5	.548

Model Fit: χ^2 : 292.399, df:129, $p \leq .001$, CFI: .92, TLI: .91, AGFI: .90, RMSEA: .05, SRMR: .05

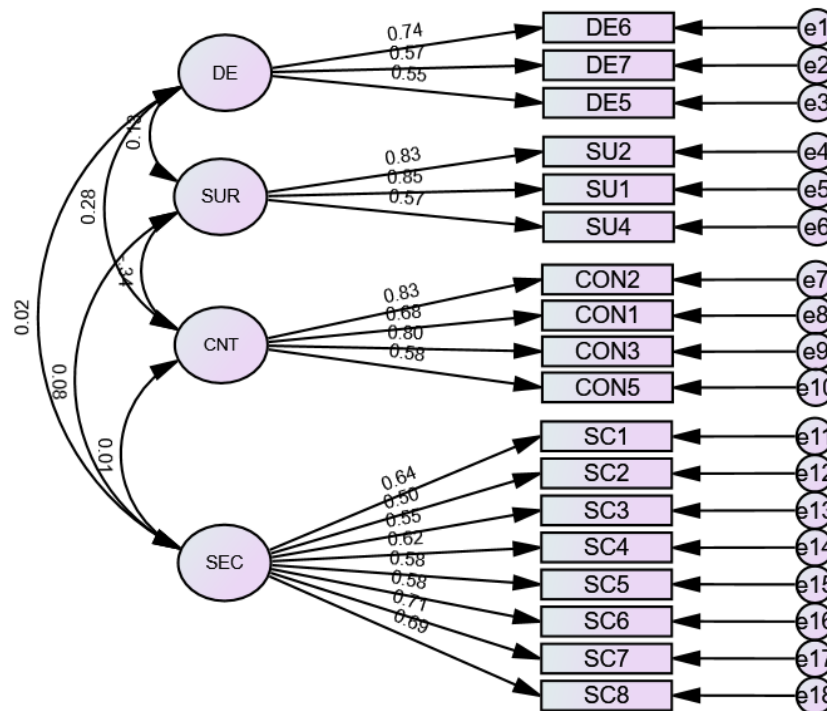


Figure 5. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Digital Perceptions Constructs

4.4.2. PHASE II: Structural Model Evaluation (Model I and Model II)

At this stage, CFA was conducted for each research model to validate the structural models formed based on hypotheses before SEM analysis was performed on the final structures resulting from EFA and CFA analyses.

4.4.2.1. MODEL I: Policing Perceptions and Digitally Mediated Cooperation Model

As an outcome of CFA, it was observed that the standardised regression coefficients for the items were at a sufficient level ($\geq .50$). (Hair et al., 2019). Also, all items in the model were statistically significant ($p < .001$). In evaluating the fit indices after CFA, good or acceptable fit values and ranges, which are widely used in the literature, were considered (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012; Hair et al., 2019). Accordingly, it was found that this model had acceptable and good fit values: CMIN = 826.398, $\chi^2/df = 1.633$,

CFI = .95, TLI = .95, AGFI = .87, RMSEA = .03, SRMR = .05 (Hair et al., 2019; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Forza & Filippini, 1998; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012) (see Table 17).

Table 17. MODEL I: Goodness-of-Fit Index Values

	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	AGFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model Fit	1.633	.95	.95	.87	.05	.03

Convergent and discriminant validity were tested to reveal the extent to which the variables in the confirmatory measurement model accurately reflect the theoretical latent structures and to ensure construct validity (Hair et al., 2019). To ensure convergent validity, the AVE value should be .50 and above; the scale's construct reliability (CR) values must have a value of .70 and above (Hair et al., 2019). When the AVE is below .5 but composite reliability is higher than .6, the convergent validity of the construct is still adequate (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The values for convergent validity are presented in Table 18.

Table 18. MODEL I: Convergent Validity Values

Constructs	CR	AVE
Police Cooperation Intention	.839	.571
Perceived Justice and Trust	.925	.611
Perceived Police Effectiveness	.883	.606
Perceived Interaction	.851	.656
Perceived Visibility	.802	.509
Perceived Association	.619	.450
Self-Censorship on Social Media	.822	.369

It was determined that the square roots of the AVE values were higher than the correlation values between the constructs, and therefore, construct validity was achieved (Hair et al., 2019). The values for discriminant validity are presented in Table 19.

Table 19. MODEL I: Discriminant Validity Values

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Police Cooperation Intention	.756						
2 Perceived Justice and Trust	.516**	.782					
3 Perceived Police Effectiveness	.356**	.739**	.778				
4 Perceived Interaction	.263**	.003	.027	.810			
5 Perceived Visibility	.178**	-.022	-.046	.459**	.713		
6 Perceived Association	.073	-.060	.012	.420**	.352**	.671	
7 Self-Censorship on Social Media	.110*	.082	.028	-.027	.038	-.086	.607

Note: **p < .001; *p < .05. The square roots of the AVE values are shown in bold

Model Fit: χ^2 : 826.398, df:506, p<.001, CFI: .95, TLI, .95, AGFI:.87, RMSEA: .03, SRMR:.05

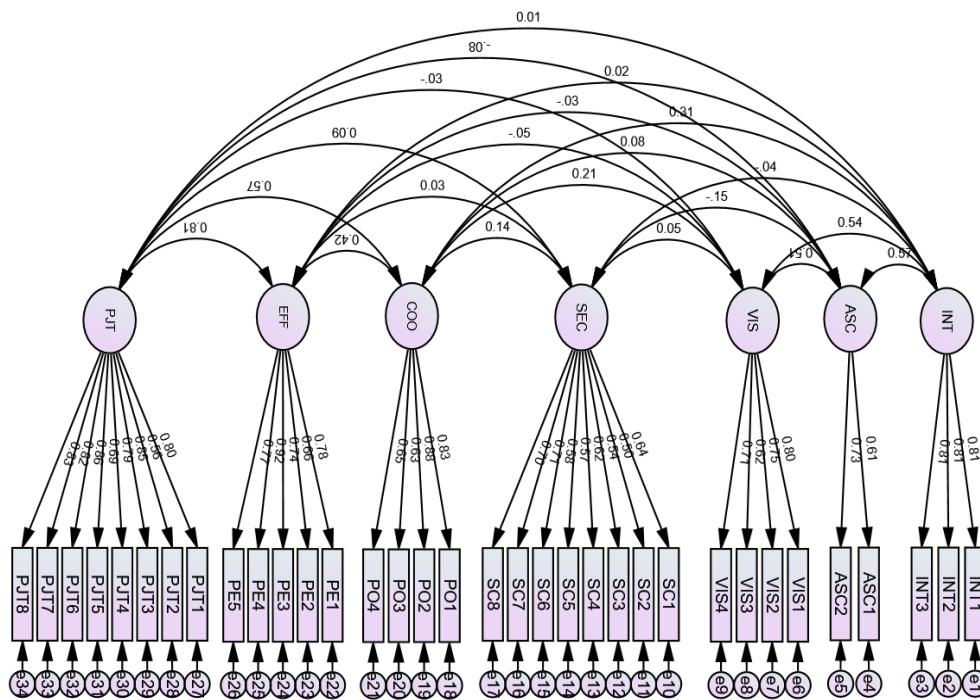


Figure 6. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of MODEL I Constructs

4.4.2.2. MODEL II: Digital Control Mechanisms and Police Cooperation Model

Following CFA, it was observed that the standardised regression coefficients for the items were at a sufficient level ($\geq .50$) (Hair et al., 2019). Also, all items in the model were statistically significant ($p < .001$). In evaluating the fit indices after CFA, good or acceptable fit values and ranges, which are widely used in the literature, were considered (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012; Hair et al., 2019). Accordingly, it was found that this model had acceptable and good fit values: CMIN = 766.183, $\chi^2/df = 1.887$, CFI = .92, TLI = .91, AGFI = .86, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .05 (Hair et al., 2019; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Forza & Filippini, 1998; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012) (see Table 20).

Table 20. MODEL II: Goodness-of-Fit Index Values

	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	AGFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model Fit	1.887	.92	.91	.86	.05	.04

Convergent and discriminant validity were tested to ensure construct validity. As a result, to ensure convergent validity, the AVE value should be .50 and above; The construct reliability (CR) values for the scale must be .70 and above (Hair et al., 2019). When the AVE is below .5 but composite reliability is higher than .6, the convergent validity of the construct is still adequate (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The values for convergent validity are presented in Table 21.

Table 21. MODEL II: Convergent Validity Values

Constructs	CR	AVE
Police Cooperation Intention	.838	.569
Perceived Control on Social Media	.816	.530
Perceived Surveillance on Social Media	.800	.579
Perceived Interaction	.851	.656
Perceived Visibility	.802	.509
Perceived Association	.615	.445
Self-Censorship on Social Media	.818	.362
Digital Efficacy	.650	.387

It was determined that the square roots of the AVE values were higher than the correlation values between the constructs, achieving construct validity (Hair et al., 2019). The values for discriminant validity are presented in Table 22.

Table 22. MODEL II: Discriminant Validity Values

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Police Cooperation Intention	.754							
2 Perceived Control	.215**	.728						
3 Perceived Surveillance	-.104*	-.315**	.761					
4 Perceived Interaction	.263**	.192**	.062	.810				
5 Perceived Visibility	.178**	.117*	.030	.459**	.713			
6 Perceived Association	.073	.099*	.044	.420**	.352**	.667		
7 Self-Censorship	.110*	.008	.086	-.027	.038	-.086	.602	
8 Digital Efficacy	.117**	.246**	.074	.333**	.181**	.267**	.033	.622

Note: **p < .001; *p < .05. The square roots of the AVE values are shown in bold.

Model Fit: χ^2 : 766.183, df: 406, $p \leq .001$, CFI: .92 TLI: .91, AGFI: .86, RMSEA: .04, SRMR: .05

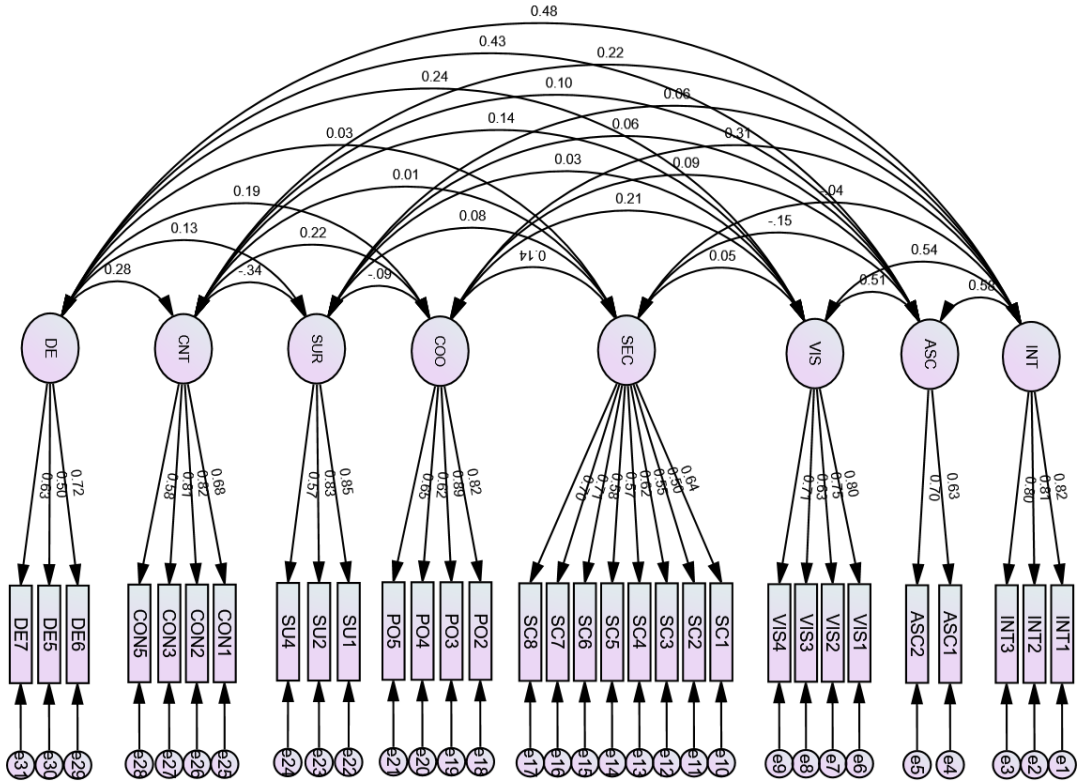


Figure 7. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of MODEL II Constructs

4.4.3. Independent-Samples t Tests and ANOVA

Research results may differ depending on demographic variables such as gender and ethnicity. Therefore, independent-samples t tests and ANOVA were initially conducted to examine the effects of these demographic variables on the main constructs. Based on the results, demographic variables that revealed significant differences were included as control variables and tested as moderators in both models.

4.4.4. Structural Equation Model

SEM is a powerful tool in revealing a set of relationships between structures. SEM provides a way to empirically examine a theoretical model by incorporating the measurement and structural models into a single analysis. Once the measurement model has been confirmed through CFA, SEM is used to test the structural theory by addressing two key aspects: overall and relative model fit as a measure of acceptance

of the proposed theory and the structural parameter estimates, which represent direct and indirect relationships with single-headed arrows within a path diagram (Hair et al., 2019).

The study developed two separate structural equation models based on the literature and hypotheses to examine the relationships between variables. Based on this, a structural model was determined with paths drawn between latent variables using AMOS. SRMR, RMSEA, CFI, and TLI fit indices were examined to evaluate overall model fit. Direct, indirect and total effects in the model are revealed. The structural model was used to test the hypothesised relationships among the latent variables.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the statistical results used to test the hypotheses, examines relationships among the constructs, and discusses the implications of the findings. The chapter begins with descriptive statistics that outline the distributions of the constructs. Means and standard deviations are reported to summarise participants' responses across the constructs.

The second section reports ANOVAs and independent-samples *t* tests examining whether the study variables differ across demographic groups. Differences are analysed by gender, age group, ethnic background, and duration of social media use. The results show differences across some demographic groups. Given that the sample was predominantly female, a large proportion of participants identified as White, and most participants were aged between 31 and 49, these findings should be interpreted with this sample profile in mind. This section provides additional context for interpreting how the study variables vary across demographic groups.

The third section explores the direct and indirect relationships among the constructs using structural equation modelling and mediation analyses. Particular attention is given to the mediating roles of perceived social media affordances and self-censorship on social media. The chapter also discusses what these findings suggest about the relationships among policing perceptions, digital control mechanisms, cooperation with the police, and digital efficacy.

5.2. Overview of Key Constructs and Sample Characteristics

This section presents an overview of the main constructs and sample characteristics. Table 23 lists the means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) for each construct. On the 5-point Likert scale, mean scores were 4.02 for cooperation with the police, 4.28 for perceived interaction, and 4.06 for perceived visibility, which were among the highest. In contrast, perceived procedural justice and trust and perceived police effectiveness had lower means and were among the more dispersed constructs (procedural justice

and trust: $M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.81$; police effectiveness: $M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.87$). Responses to these two constructs were more varied.

The mean for intention to cooperate with the police ($M = 4.02$) suggests a generally favourable stance toward cooperation. By contrast, perceived police effectiveness had a lower mean ($M = 2.86$). This suggests that intention to cooperate was rated more positively than police effectiveness in this sample and may not be shaped solely by evaluations of effectiveness.

Procedural justice and trust were measured as a single construct. The mean score was 3.13, indicating a mid-range assessment rather than clearly positive evaluations. As reported in Chapter 4, the EFA indicated that participants did not clearly separate procedural justice from trust, as the items loaded onto a single factor and were therefore combined for subsequent analyses.

Table 23. Means and Standard Deviations of Constructs ($N = 421$)

Constructs	M	SD
Perceived Procedural Justice and Trust	3.13	.806
Perceived Police Effectiveness	2.86	.865
Police Cooperation Intention	4.02	.637
Perceived Association	3.56	.804
Perceived Visibility	4.06	.565
Perceived Interaction	4.28	.541
Perceived Surveillance on Social Media	3.29	.862
Perceived Control on Social Media	3.14	.818
Digital Efficacy	3.55	.630
Self-Censorship on Social Media	3.31	.636

Perceived visibility ($M = 4.06$) and perceived interaction ($M = 4.28$) had the highest mean scores among the perceived social media affordances. The mean for visibility suggests that respondents perceived posts as widely seen and easy to notice. Perceived interaction also received a high mean rating ($M = 4.28$), suggesting that social media

was seen as facilitating interactive participation. Perceived association had a moderate mean ($M = 3.56$), lower than visibility ($M = 4.06$) and interaction ($M = 4.28$), suggesting that it was recognised, but less strongly than the other affordances.

With a mean of 3.55 on a 5-point scale, digital efficacy was moderately positive, suggesting that participants perceived some capacity to act collectively and make decisions on social media. Responses suggest an open but cautious approach to collective action. The strongest agreement was observed for the item “I can collaborate with others on social media by joining groups that share my goals or interests”, with 83.1% selecting Agree or Strongly Agree. Responses show willingness to take part around shared goals. In contrast, the item “If users cause problems on social media, other users will warn them” received the most negative and neutral responses. 20.2% disagreed, and 36.1% were neutral on this item. This distribution suggests some reluctance to step in and correct other users’ behaviour, even when problems arise. Overall, the results suggest a moderate level of digital efficacy, with stronger confidence in joining others around shared goals than in responding to problematic behaviour on social media.

Perceived surveillance ($M = 3.29$) and perceived control ($M = 3.14$) were both at mid-range levels. Agree/Strongly Agree responses were 47.7% ($n = 201$) for “Most users believe they have been subject to surveillance on social media” and 55.6% ($n = 234$) for “I consider social media to be a surveillance environment.” These results suggest that many participants recognised surveillance as a feature of social media. Disagree/Strongly Disagree responses were 34.6% ($n = 146$) for “I personally believe I have been subject to surveillance on social media” and 21.0% ($n = 88$) for “Most users believe they have been subject to surveillance on social media.” For “I consider social media to be a surveillance environment,” 15.5% ($n = 65$) selected Disagree or Strongly Disagree. Overall, respondents appeared to recognise surveillance as a feature of social media, but were less certain that it applied directly to them.

The mean score for perceived control was 3.14, indicating a mid-level sense of control. Agree/Strongly Agree responses were 54.0% ($n = 227$) for “I feel in control over the information I provide on social media” and 42.5% ($n = 179$) for “Privacy settings allow me to have full control over the information I provide on social media.” 48.7% ($n =$

205) agreed or strongly agreed with “I feel in control of who can view my information on social media.” Low-control responses were most evident for “My personal information cannot be made available to unknown persons or institutions on social media without my consent.” For this item, 43.2% ($n = 182$) selected Disagree or Strongly Disagree. Perceptions of control were moderate rather than strong, with clear uncertainty about whether personal information could be kept from unknown parties or institutions.

This section has outlined the descriptive profile of the main constructs. The next section examines whether these variables differ across demographic groups through ANOVAs and independent-samples t tests.

5.3. Exploring Demographic Influences: Independent-Samples t Tests and One-Way ANOVAs

This section assesses whether the study variables differ across demographic groups, including gender, ethnicity, age, and social media usage duration. Independent-samples t tests and one-way ANOVAs were used to examine between-group differences. Some ethnic categories were small in size (e.g., Mixed, $n = 18$; Asian or Asian British, $n = 25$), so ethnicity was collapsed into two groups: White ($n = 366$) and Other ethnic backgrounds ($n = 55$). This grouping made statistical comparison more reliable, although it may have obscured group-specific differences. Similarly, because the non-binary ($n = 3$) and not specified ($n = 1$) categories were too small for meaningful comparison, gender analyses focused on male ($n = 136$) and female ($n = 281$) participants.

Table 24. Mean Values of Variables by Gender

Variables	Male ($n = 136$) M	Female ($n = 281$) M
Perceived Procedural Justice and Trust	3.155	3.133
Perceived Police Effectiveness	2.819	2.897
Police Cooperation Intention	3.943	4.065
Perceived Visibility	3.990	4.105
Perceived Interaction	4.159	4.346

Variables	Male (<i>n</i> = 136) M	Female (<i>n</i> = 281) M
Perceived Association	3.544	3.574
Perceived Control on Social Media	2.917	3.262
Perceived Surveillance on Social Media	3.281	3.301
Digital Efficacy	3.480	3.597
Self-Censorship on Social Media	3.109	3.413

Table 24 shows that women reported slightly higher mean scores than men on most variables, whereas men reported a marginally higher mean only for perceived procedural justice and trust. As shown in Table 25, statistically significant gender differences were observed only for perceived interaction, perceived control on social media, and self-censorship on social media, with women scoring higher than men on all three variables (interaction: women $M = 4.35$, men $M = 4.16$; perceived control: women $M = 3.26$, men $M = 2.92$; self-censorship: women $M = 3.41$, men $M = 3.11$). By contrast, gender differences in police cooperation intention, perceived visibility, digital efficacy, perceived police effectiveness, perceived procedural justice and trust, perceived association, and perceived surveillance on social media were not statistically significant. Previous UK research suggests that women report greater fear of online harms and lower comfort with several forms of online participation (Enock et al., 2024). This may help contextualise why women in the present study reported higher levels of self-censorship on social media.

Table 25. Results of Independent Samples t Test by Gender

Variables	F	t	df	p
Perceived Procedural Justice and Trust	.052	.256	415	.798
Self-Censorship on Social Media	1.733	-4.675	415	<.001
Police Cooperation Intention	.460	-1.854	415	.064
Perceived Visibility	.886	-1.932	415	.054
Perceived Interaction	2.406	-3.339	415	<.001
Perceived Association	.677	-.363	415	.717
Perceived Control on Social Media	2.821	-4.111	415	<.001

Variables	F	t	df	p
Perceived Surveillance on Social Media	.291	-.215	415	.830
Digital Efficacy	.001	-1.797	415	.073
Perceived Police Effectiveness	1.447	-.869	415	.385

Table 26 presents mean values by ethnicity. For perceived procedural justice and trust, participants identifying as White reported a slightly higher mean ($M = 3.15$) than participants from other ethnic backgrounds ($M = 2.97$). By contrast, perceived police effectiveness was slightly higher among participants from other ethnic backgrounds ($M = 3.06$) than among participants identifying as White ($M = 2.83$).

Table 26. Mean Values of Variables by Ethnicity

Variables	White ($n = 366$) M	Other Ethnic Backgrounds ($n = 55$) M
Perceived Procedural Justice and Trust	3.15	2.97
Perceived Police Effectiveness	2.83	3.06
Police Cooperation Intention	4.04	3.90
Perceived Visibility	4.07	4.01
Perceived Interaction	4.28	4.26
Perceived Association	3.55	3.64
Perceived Control on Social Media	3.16	2.99
Perceived Surveillance on Social Media	3.25	3.57
Digital Efficacy	3.54	3.65
Self-Censorship on Social Media	3.33	3.20

Intention to cooperate was also slightly higher among participants identifying as White ($M = 4.04$) than among participants from other ethnic backgrounds ($M = 3.90$). Perceived surveillance, however, was higher among participants from other ethnic backgrounds ($M = 3.57$) than among participants identifying as White ($M = 3.25$). Digital efficacy was also slightly higher among participants from other ethnic backgrounds ($M = 3.65$) than among participants identifying as White ($M = 3.54$). By

contrast, participants identifying as White reported slightly higher mean scores for self-censorship on social media (White: $M = 3.33$; other ethnic backgrounds: $M = 3.20$) and perceived control on social media (White: $M = 3.16$; other ethnic backgrounds: $M = 2.99$).

Table 27. Results of Independent Samples t Tests by Ethnicity

Variables	F	t	df	p
Police Cooperation Intention	.160	1.520	419	.129
Perceived Visibility	.153	.688	419	.492
Perceived Procedural Justice and Trust	.969	1.593	419	.112
Perceived Interaction	.818	.347	419	.729
Perceived Association	.424	-.780	419	.436
Perceived Control on Social Media	.000	1.472	419	.142
Perceived Surveillance on Social Media	.024	-2.567	419	.011
Digital Efficacy	.480	-1.206	419	.229
Self-Censorship on Social Media	.713	1.380	419	.168
Perceived Police Effectiveness	.068	-1.809	419	.071

As shown in Table 27, a statistically significant ethnic difference was observed only for perceived surveillance on social media, with participants from other ethnic backgrounds reporting higher scores than participants identifying as White, $t(419) = -2.57, p = .011$. No statistically significant ethnic differences were found for the other study variables. These results should be interpreted cautiously, however, because the sample was heavily imbalanced and several categories were combined into a single group labelled Other Ethnic Backgrounds owing to small cell sizes. This grouping made statistical comparison possible, but it may also have obscured group-specific differences. Although only perceived surveillance on social media was statistically significant in the present sample, this finding can be read alongside prior research showing that ethnic minority group members often report lower trust in the police, which is associated with willingness to cooperate with the police (Panditharatne et al., 2021).

Table 28. ANOVA and Tukey Test Results by Age Group

Variable	ANOVA F	ANOVA p	Tukey Test Group Comparison	Mean Difference	p
Perceived Procedural Justice and Trust	3.741	.005	18-30 vs. 51-60	-.493	.002
Perceived Visibility	3.235	.012	18-30 vs. 51-60	.283	.021
			41-50 vs. 51-60	.305	.018
Perceived Surveillance on Social Media	3.581	.007	18-30 vs. 41-50	.378	.017

Note. Significant differences ($p < .05$) were found between age groups for the variables listed.

One-way ANOVAs were used to examine age-group differences in the study variables. Significant age-group differences were observed for perceived procedural justice and trust ($F = 3.741, p = .005$), perceived visibility ($F = 3.235, p = .012$), and perceived surveillance on social media ($F = 3.581, p = .007$). No significant age-group differences were detected for the other variables. Tukey post hoc tests were conducted to follow up on the significant ANOVA results. For perceived procedural justice and trust, the 18–30 vs. 51–60 comparison was significant ($MD = -0.493, p = .002$). For perceived visibility, significant differences were observed between 18–30 and 51–60 ($MD = 0.283, p = .021$) and between 41–50 and 51–60 ($MD = 0.305, p = .018$). For perceived surveillance on social media, the 18–30 vs. 41–50 comparison was significant ($MD = 0.378, p = .017$). These findings suggest that age-related differences were more evident for perceived procedural justice and trust, perceived visibility, and perceived surveillance on social media than for the other constructs. They also suggest that perceptions of digital visibility and monitoring may vary across age groups. This is also broadly in line with UK evidence indicating that adults aged 18–34 are more likely than older users, particularly those aged 55 and over, to encounter at least one potential harm online (Ofcom, 2022).

Table 29. ANOVA and Tukey Test Results by Social Media Usage Duration

Variable	ANOVA F	ANOVA p	Tukey Test Group Comparison (Usage Duration)	Mean Difference	p
Perceived Procedural Justice and Trust	5.673	<.001	Less than 1 hour vs. More than 3 hours	.376	.015
			1-2 hours vs. More than 3 hours	.393	<.001
Perceived Visibility	3.404	.018	Less than 1 hour vs. More than 3 hours	-.263	.016
			Less than 1 hour vs. 2-3 hours	-.240	.038
Perceived Interaction	4.908	.002	Less than 1 hour vs. More than 3 hours	-.282	.005
			1-2 hours vs. More than 3 hours	-.193	.023
Perceived Association	9.314	<.001	Less than 1 hour vs. More than 3 hours	-.560	<.001
			1-2 hours vs. More than 3 hours	-.373	<.001
			Less than 1 hour vs. 2-3 hours	.450	.002
			1-2 hours vs. 2-3 hours	-.262	.047
Perceived Surveillance on Social Media	5.571	<.001	Less than 1 hour vs. More than 3 hours	-.391	.019
			1-2 hours vs. More than 3 hours	-.418	<.001
Digital Efficacy	4.348	.005	Less than 1 hour vs. 2-3 hours	.278	.028
			1-2 hours vs. 2-3 hours	.266	.006

Note. Significant differences ($p < .05$) were found across social media usage durations (Less than 1 hour, 1-2 hours, 2-3 hours, more than 3 hours) for the listed variables.

A one-way ANOVA by social media usage duration indicated significant group differences for several study variables, as shown in Table 29, which also presents the detailed mean differences and p values for the Tukey post hoc comparisons. Significant differences were observed for procedural justice and trust, perceived visibility, perceived interaction, perceived association, perceived surveillance on social media, and digital efficacy. For procedural justice and trust, participants using social media for more than 3 hours reported lower mean scores than those using it for

less than 1 hour or for 1–2 hours. For perceived visibility and perceived interaction, significant differences were observed between lower- and higher-use groups, with higher-use groups generally reporting higher scores. Perceived association also differed significantly across usage-duration groups, although the differences did not follow a single clear pattern. For perceived surveillance on social media, participants using social media for more than 3 hours reported higher scores than those using it for less than 1 hour or for 1–2 hours. By contrast, digital efficacy was lower among participants using social media for 2–3 hours than among those using it for less than 1 hour or for 1–2 hours.

The ANOVA results indicated no consistent significant differences in the study variables across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Although a statistically significant difference in digital efficacy was observed between Wales and Northern Ireland, this result was not emphasised in the main findings because of the small group sizes (Wales: $n = 24$; Northern Ireland: $n = 9$). Small group sizes limit the reliability of this comparison.

These demographic analyses suggest that group differences were more evident in some social media-related variables than in police-related variables. Gender differences were most visible in perceived interaction, perceived control on social media, and self-censorship on social media, while ethnic differences emerged only for perceived surveillance on social media. Age and social media usage duration were also linked to differences in several of these variables, providing useful context for the SEM analyses that follow.

The preceding analyses described between-group differences in the study variables across relevant demographic categories. However, group comparisons alone do not address the relationships among variables or potential mediation effects. Therefore, the following sections present and interpret the SEM results for the two models developed in line with the study's aims and hypotheses.

5.4. Evaluation of Structural Models

This section presents the results of the structural equation models. It first reports the model fit indices and then examines the direct and indirect relationships among the study variables.

5.4.1. MODEL I: Policing Perceptions and Digitally Mediated Cooperation Model

This model examines how perceptions of policing, specifically perceived procedural justice and trust and perceived police effectiveness, predict intention to cooperate with the police. Using SEM, six hypotheses are tested, including the direct effects of these policing perceptions and the mediating roles of perceived social media affordances and self-censorship on social media. The overall fit of the structural model is assessed before the estimated paths are interpreted.

5.4.1.1. Evaluation of Model Fit

This section explains how model fit is evaluated in this study by reporting the fit indices and the criteria used. In SEM, model fit is assessed before the structural paths are interpreted.

Different types of fit indices are used in SEM: absolute, incremental, and parsimony fit indices. Absolute indices assess how well the hypothesised model reproduces the observed data. Indices such as chi-square (χ^2), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardised Root Mean Residual (SRMR) fall into this category. Among absolute fit measures, the most fundamental is the chi-square test. The chi-square test compares the observed covariance matrix with the model-implied covariance matrix and tests exact fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Hair et al., 2019). RMSEA indexes population misfit per degree of freedom and indicates how well the model would fit in the population, with lower values reflecting better fit (Hair et al., 2019). SRMR, an absolute fit index, is the root mean square of the standardised residuals between the observed and model-implied correlations (Hair et al., 2019). Incremental fit indices evaluate the improvement in fit of the hypothesised model relative to a baseline independence (null) model. The Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) and

the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) are widely used incremental indices (Hair et al., 2019). TLI gauges improvement over a baseline independence model while adjusting for model complexity (degrees of freedom) (Hair et al., 2019). The CFI is a comparative fit index that reflects the proportional reduction in noncentrality of the hypothesised model relative to the independence baseline model (Bentler, 1990). Parsimony fit indices balance model fit and simplicity when comparing competing models. Among them, the Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) adjusts the GFI by a degrees-of-freedom ratio, so more complex models tend to have lower AGFI (Hair et al., 2019).

The literature reports commonly used cut-off guidelines for TLI, CFI, SRMR, RMSEA and AGFI, though recommendations vary by source and context. Practical thresholds commonly used in SEM indicate that CFI and TLI of approximately .95 or higher reflect good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). SRMR at or below .08 and RMSEA at or below .06 are typically treated as good under maximum likelihood estimation (Hu & Bentler, 1999). RMSEA is often read in bands with values below .05 indicating close fit, .05 to .08 indicating reasonable fit, and values above .10 indicating poor fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). Instead of relying on a single index, evaluation generally follows a two index approach, for example pairing SRMR with CFI or TLI or pairing SRMR with RMSEA, which is supported by simulation work (Hu & Bentler, 1999). AGFI is sensitive to sample size and model complexity and lacks an associated statistical test, so it is now rarely used as a primary decision index and its use has declined in practice (Hair et al., 2019). Overall, Model I demonstrated acceptable fit (see Table 30).

Table 30. Goodness-of-Fit Indices for Model I

	CMIN	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	AGFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model Fit	844.495	1.656	.95	.94	.87	.05	.04

Model Fit: χ^2 : 844.495, df:510, $p \leq .001$, CFI: .95 TLI: .94, AGFI: .87, RMSEA: .04,

SRMR: .05

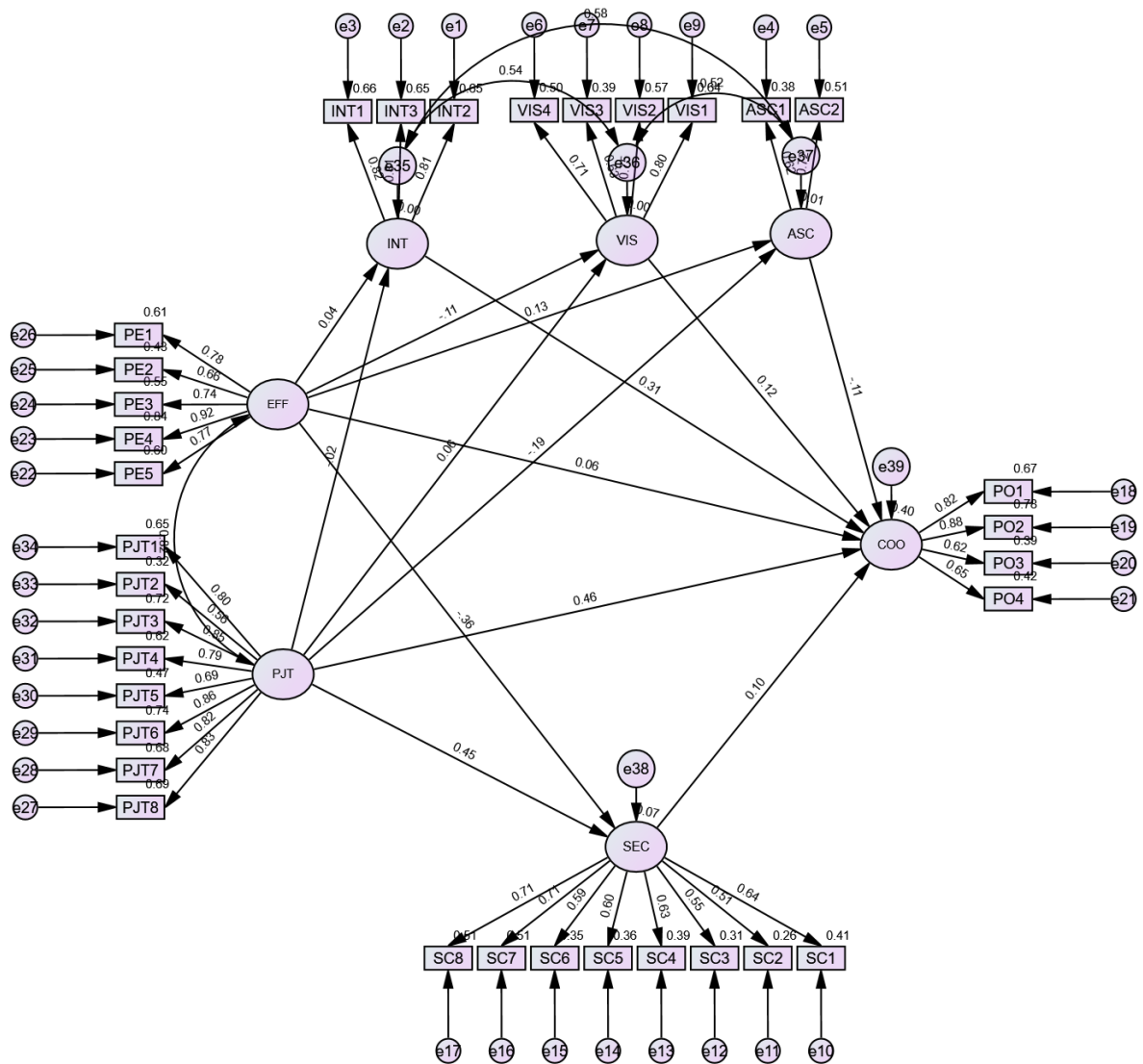


Figure 8. MODEL I: Policing Perceptions and Digitally Mediated Cooperation Model

EFA indicated that procedural justice and trust loaded on a single factor. Although procedural justice and trust in the police are often treated as separate constructs in the literature, the empirical structure in this study suggested a single underlying construct. Consistent with this, CFA supported the unified measurement structure and showed acceptable fit (see Figure 9). The SEM results indicate that the procedural justice and trust construct was a strong predictor of intention to cooperate with the police, and the fit indices supported the specified model. This result suggests that the measurement

structure of procedural justice and trust may vary across contexts and sample characteristics.

Model Fit: χ^2 : 826.398, df:506, $p \leq .001$, CFI: .95, TLI: .95, AGFI: .87, RMSEA: .03, SRMR: .05

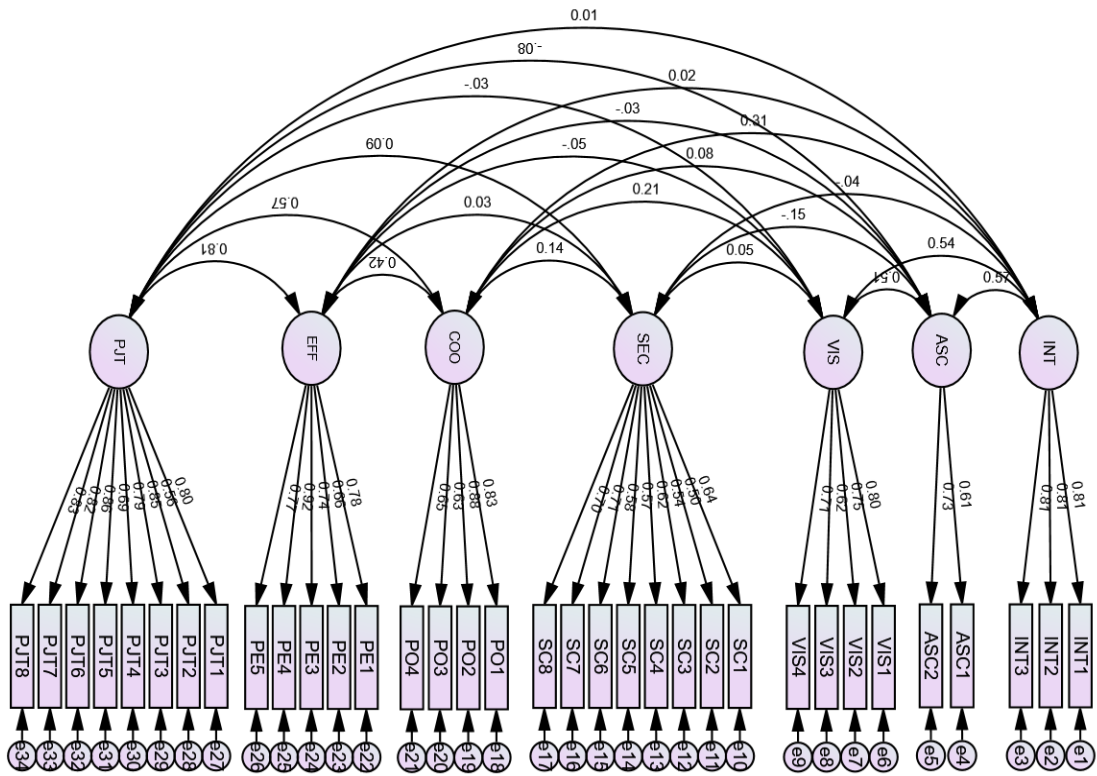


Figure 9. CFA of Policing Perceptions and Digitally Mediated Cooperation Model

5.4.1.2. Direct Effects: Policing Perceptions

This section presents the direct effects of policing perceptions on intention to cooperate with the police. As shown in Table 31, perceived procedural justice and trust had a positive and statistically significant direct effect on intention to cooperate with the police, whereas perceived police effectiveness was not a significant predictor.

Table 31. Model I: Direct Effects on Police Cooperation Intention

Structural Relation	Std. β	t-value	p-value
Perceived Procedural Justice and Trust \rightarrow Police Cooperation Intention	.457	6.069	< .001
Perceived Police Effectiveness \rightarrow Police Cooperation Intention	.061	.773	.439

In the present study, respondents who viewed the police as fair, respectful, and trustworthy reported stronger intentions to cooperate. Anrango Narváez et al. (2023) found greater willingness to cooperate following a procedurally just police intervention, while Hohl et al. (2013) showed that trust and confidence in the police are linked to willingness to cooperate. This finding is consistent with these previous studies and supports the role of the procedural justice and trust construct in explaining cooperation intention. In this study, however, this construct does not refer to trust in isolation. Since procedural justice and trust loaded together in the measurement model, this construct is best understood as capturing a broader set of police-related evaluations, including perceived fairness, respectful treatment, and trust.

In Model I, perceived police effectiveness did not predict intentions to cooperate. Kochel et al. (2013) similarly found support for a process-based account of cooperation rather than one centred on police effectiveness, while Huq et al. (2011) showed that cooperation was better predicted by procedural justice than by perceptions of police efficacy. By contrast, studies in Ghana, among Ghanaian immigrants, and in Somalia reported a stronger role for perceived police effectiveness in shaping cooperation (Tankebe, 2009; Pryce et al., 2017; Abdi & Hashi, 2024). These differences may reflect the fact that evaluations of police effectiveness carry different meanings depending on local policing conditions and individuals' experiences of policing. Where people are concerned about public security and police response to crime, evaluations of effectiveness may become more important for cooperation.

The contrast between the two direct effects is important. Model I does not suggest that all positive views of the police work in the same way. Cooperation intention was linked to how people understood the police–public relationship, especially whether the police were seen as fair, respectful, and trustworthy in their use of authority. However, this

finding does not mean that trust is positive or desirable in all circumstances. From the perspective of democratic policing, trust should not be understood as blind institutional attachment. If the police do not act fairly, are not accountable, or overlook the experiences of certain groups, lower trust may be a rational response. Trust is valuable when it is grounded in fair treatment, accountability, and the possibility of public scrutiny when police conduct is contested (Goldsmith, 2005; Muntingh et al., 2021).

These results identify the direct relationships between policing perceptions and cooperation intention, but they do not explain how these relationships are shaped in digital environments. Potential mediators such as perceived visibility, perceived interaction, perceived association, and self-censorship on social media may influence how individuals discuss the police, express criticism, remain silent, or develop an intention to cooperate. Therefore, the next section examines the mediating roles of perceived social media affordances and social media self-censorship in these relationships.

5.4.1.3. Self-Censorship on Social Media: Mediating Effects on Police Cooperation Intention

A mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether perceived social media affordances and self-censorship on social media mediated the effects of procedural justice and trust, and police effectiveness, on intention to cooperate with the police. As shown in Table 32, the indirect effects through perceived interaction, visibility, and association were not significant. By contrast, self-censorship showed two significant indirect effects in opposite directions. The indirect effect from procedural justice and trust to intention to cooperate through self-censorship was positive and significant ($p = .042$), whereas the indirect effect from police effectiveness to intention to cooperate through self-censorship was negative and significant ($p = .042$).

Table 32. Model I: Mediated Effects on Police Cooperation Intention

User-defined estimand	Estimate	95% CI		p-value
		Lower	Upper	
Perceived procedural justice and trust to police cooperation intention via perceived interaction	-.006	-.056	.046	.810
Perceived procedural justice and trust to police cooperation intention via perceived visibility	.005	-.009	.055	.370
Perceived procedural justice and trust to police cooperation intention via perceived association	.016	-.005	.111	.165
Perceived procedural justice and trust to police cooperation intention via self-censorship	.033	.001	.074	.042*
Perceived police effectiveness to police cooperation intention via perceived interaction	.010	-.040	.064	.635
Perceived police effectiveness to police cooperation intention via perceived visibility	-.009	-.063	.004	.209
Perceived police effectiveness to police cooperation intention via perceived association	-.010	-.096	.006	.235
Perceived police effectiveness to police cooperation intention via self-censorship	-.025	-.061	-.001	.042*

Note. *p < .05

Self-censorship positively mediated the effect of procedural justice and trust on intention to cooperate with the police. In this pathway, self-censorship appears to involve greater caution in how individuals manage what they say or share online. Bartal (2017a) defines self-censorship as the voluntary withholding of information when individuals perceive some cost in speaking openly, even in the absence of formal restrictions. In online settings, this can take the form of speaking more carefully, sharing less, or reducing participation (Celuch et al., 2024). The positive indirect effect suggests that when the police are perceived as fair and trustworthy, cautious conduct on social media may accompany a stronger intention to cooperate. This indicates that a stronger intention to cooperate with the police may coexist with cautious and less openly critical forms of online expression.

Self-censorship on social media negatively mediated the effect of police effectiveness on intention to cooperate with the police. Although perceived police effectiveness did not have a significant direct effect, the indirect pathway points to a different process once self-censorship is involved. Self-censorship in this relationship seems less like careful participation and more like self-protection. Adamska et al. (2022) link self-censorship to the belief that speaking up will not make a difference, while Celuch et al. (2024) describe online self-censorship as a response to possible harm. This suggests that, in this pathway, self-censorship may reflect a more withdrawn response rather than cautious participation.

These two self-censorship pathways indicate that the same mediator did not operate in a single direction in Model I. In the procedural justice and trust pathway, the indirect effect was positive, whereas in the police effectiveness pathway it was negative. This makes it difficult to treat self-censorship as a uniform mechanism with a single meaning. When self-censorship is involved, cooperation should not be treated as a straightforwardly positive outcome. Its meaning also depends on how openly or cautiously people express themselves in public. Self-censorship can restrict free expression and narrow the circulation of information (Bar-Tal, 2017b). In this model, stronger cooperation may coexist with a quieter, cautious, and less critical public stance. This finding also complicates the meaning of trust and cooperation. Trust in the police is important, but people should still be able to question and criticise the police when they think something is wrong. In this sense, cooperation shaped by self-censorship may be weaker than cooperation based on open and confident engagement.

This could be important for groups that may already feel vulnerable in relation to the police. For example, some young people raised concerns about not being believed and about the possible consequences of complaining about the police (Independent Office for Police Conduct, 2024). If people think criticism will not be taken seriously or that speaking openly may create problems, silence can become a way of protecting themselves. In such cases, people may still cooperate, but this does not necessarily mean that they feel able to speak openly or question police conduct. Cooperation shaped by this kind of caution needs to be interpreted carefully.

These findings can also be understood through a broader governmentality perspective. In digitally mediated settings, people may shape their own behaviour in response to how they perceive the police (Foucault, 2014a). Where procedural justice and trust were involved, self-censorship seemed to reflect a careful and compliant form of conduct. By contrast, where police effectiveness was involved, it seemed closer to a defensive response linked to self-protection and risk avoidance. From this perspective, cooperation with the police is not simply a matter of trust or goodwill. It may also be connected to how people seek to manage perceived risks and possible consequences in the digital environment (Laval, 2012). In this sense, self-censorship suggests that digitally mediated cooperation may involve an intention to cooperate with the police, while also reflecting an effort to remain careful and protected.

5.4.1.4. Perceived Social Media Affordances: Mediating Effects on Police Cooperation Intention

In Model I, perceived social media affordances, namely interaction, visibility, and association, did not significantly mediate the effects of policing perceptions on intention to cooperate with the police (all $ps > .05$). This result concerns the mediating role of perceived affordances in this model. The following discussion considers why these perceived affordances may be present without necessarily functioning as mediators in the relationship between perceptions of policing and cooperation intention.

The descriptive results provide useful context. Participants generally rated social media as visible ($M = 4.06$) and interactive ($M = 4.28$), while association received a lower mean score ($M = 3.56$). Participants considered social media a space for visible and responsive communication, but not necessarily for building sustained relationships between the police and the public. This may help explain why participants perceived some communicative possibilities on social media, but these perceptions did not mediate the relationship between perceptions of policing and cooperation intention.

Because the mediation effects were not significant, a follow-up SEM was estimated to examine whether perceived social media affordances had direct effects on intention to cooperate with the police. This additional model assessed perceived social media

affordances separately from their mediating role. The model showed acceptable fit: CMIN = 146.847, $\chi^2/df = 2.489$, CFI = .96, TLI = .94, AGFI = .91, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .06.

Model Fit: χ^2 : 146.847, df:59, $p \leq .001$, CFI: .96 TLI: .94, AGFI: .91, RMSEA: .06, SRMR:.04

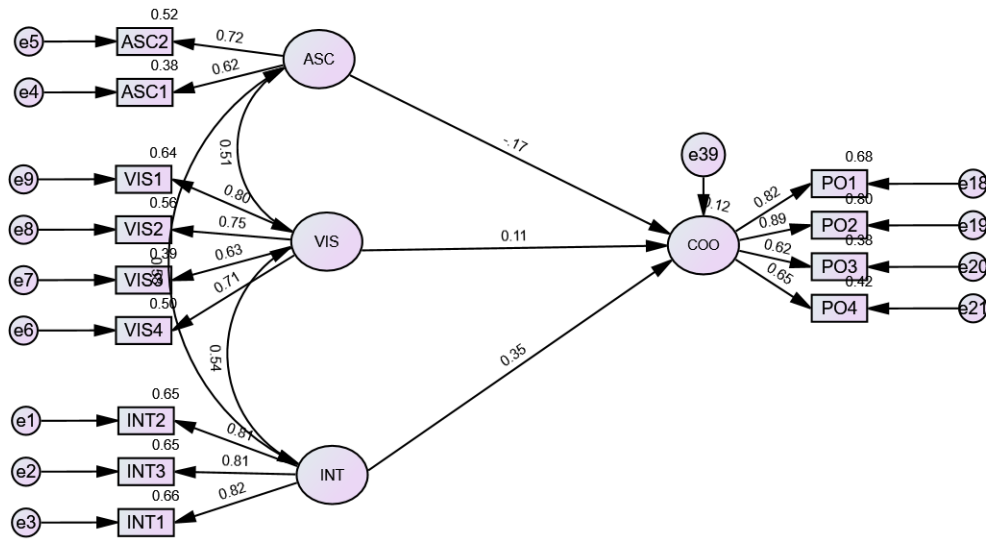


Figure 10. Perceived Social Media Affordances: Direct Effects on Police Cooperation Intention

Table 33. Perceived Social Media Affordances: Direct Effects on Police Cooperation Intention

Structural Relation	Std. β	t-value	p-value
Perceived Association \rightarrow Police Cooperation Intention	-.172	-1.832	.067
Perceived Interaction \rightarrow Police Cooperation Intention	.345	4.164	< .001
Perceived Visibility \rightarrow Police Cooperation Intention	.115	1.524	.128

In the follow-up SEM, perceived interaction had a significant positive direct effect on intention to cooperate with the police ($\beta = .345, p < .001$). Perceived visibility was not significant ($\beta = .115, p = .128$), and perceived association was also not significant ($\beta = -.172, p = .067$). The significant effect of perceived interaction suggests that

cooperation intention was related to people's sense that social media enables them to respond, exchange views, and participate in online communication. Perceived visibility and association did not have the same direct effect.

The follow-up SEM result fits with how police social media communication is often organised. Social media may allow response, exchange, and participation, although police use of these platforms is often more information-driven than dialogue-based. Police social media use is often described as update-driven, focused on public information and image management, with less emphasis on sustained dialogue with the public (Crump, 2011; Heverin & Zach, 2010; Boateng & Chenane, 2020; Qiu, 2021). This may help explain why perceived interaction had a direct effect, whereas visibility and association did not. Seeing police-related communication online may increase awareness, yet cooperation intention appears to be more closely linked to a sense that communication can involve response and exchange.

Police visibility on social media is often tied to image and reputation. For example, Kudla and Parnaby (2018) argue that, despite Twitter's dialogic potential, police use of the platform tends to legitimise the organisation through image work rather than foster meaningful engagement with citizens. O'Connor and Zaidi (2021) similarly suggest that police organisations use social media to present themselves as effective and open to engaging with the public. Visibility may make the police more present in online spaces without necessarily strengthening the intention to cooperate. If individuals experience visibility mainly as an institutional presentation, its effect on cooperation may remain limited.

A similar point applies to perceived association. Social media platforms may create opportunities for users, organisations, and communities to connect, but these opportunities depend on how police organisations use social media. Bullock (2018) argues that police use of social media is shaped by organisational concerns, including risk, control, strategy, and the support available to officers. Bullock et al. (2021) note that affordances such as visibility, editability, and association do not emerge automatically, but depend on organisational, individual, and technological conditions. The findings of the present study suggest that perceived association can be interpreted in terms of whether participants saw it as enabling meaningful police-public

relationships. Users may feel able to connect with the police or other users on social media, but if these connections do not foster a sense of reciprocal communication or continuity, they may not affect intention to cooperate with the police.

Police social media can support public assistance during specific incidents, including crisis updates and appeals for information (Denef et al., 2013; Gascó et al., 2017). Missing person appeals are one example, as social media can draw attention to a specific case and encourage people to share information (Ferguson & Soave, 2021). This is still different from building a broader and longer-term intention to cooperate with the police.

The follow-up SEM identifies perceived interaction as the main affordance predictor of police cooperation intention, although perceived social media affordances did not operate as mediators in Model I. The next section introduces Model II, which examines the direct and indirect relationships between perceived surveillance, perceived control on social media, intention to cooperate with the police, and digital efficacy.

5.4.2. MODEL II: Digital Control Mechanisms and Police Cooperation Model

While Model I focused on policing perceptions, the Digital Control Mechanisms and Police Cooperation Model focuses on digital perceptions and considers how perceived control and perceived surveillance on social media affect both intention to cooperate with the police and individuals' digital efficacy.

In this model, intention to cooperate with the police refers to the tendency to share information with the police, cooperate during an incident, and support the maintenance of public order. Digital efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs about their ability to participate in and contribute to collective action through social media. The model also tests whether perceived social media affordances and self-censorship mediate the relationships between digital control mechanisms and the two outcomes.

In this study, digital efficacy is conceptualised and tested empirically within Model II. The model proposes that social media may support collective capacity by enabling users to share information, respond to others, and coordinate action. For this reason,

an additional structural model was estimated to examine whether perceived social media affordances had direct effects on digital efficacy.

This section presents the SEM results for the hypotheses specified in the second structural model. Model fit is reported first, followed by the direct and indirect effects of the variables included in the model.

5.4.2.1. Evaluation of Model Fit

Model II was evaluated using the same SEM fit guidelines as Model I. The fit indices, shown in Table 34, indicated an acceptable fit to the data (CMIN = 775.618, χ^2/df = 1.892, CFI = .92, TLI = .91, AGFI = .86, SRMR = .05, RMSEA = .04). The structural model for Model II is illustrated in Figure 11.

Table 34. Goodness-of-Fit Indices for Model II

	CMIN	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	AGFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model Fit	775.618	1.892	.92	.91	.86	.05	.04

Model Fit: $\chi^2:775.618$, $df:410$, $p \leq .001$, CFI: .92 TLI: .91, AGFI: .86, RMSEA: .04,
SRMR:.05

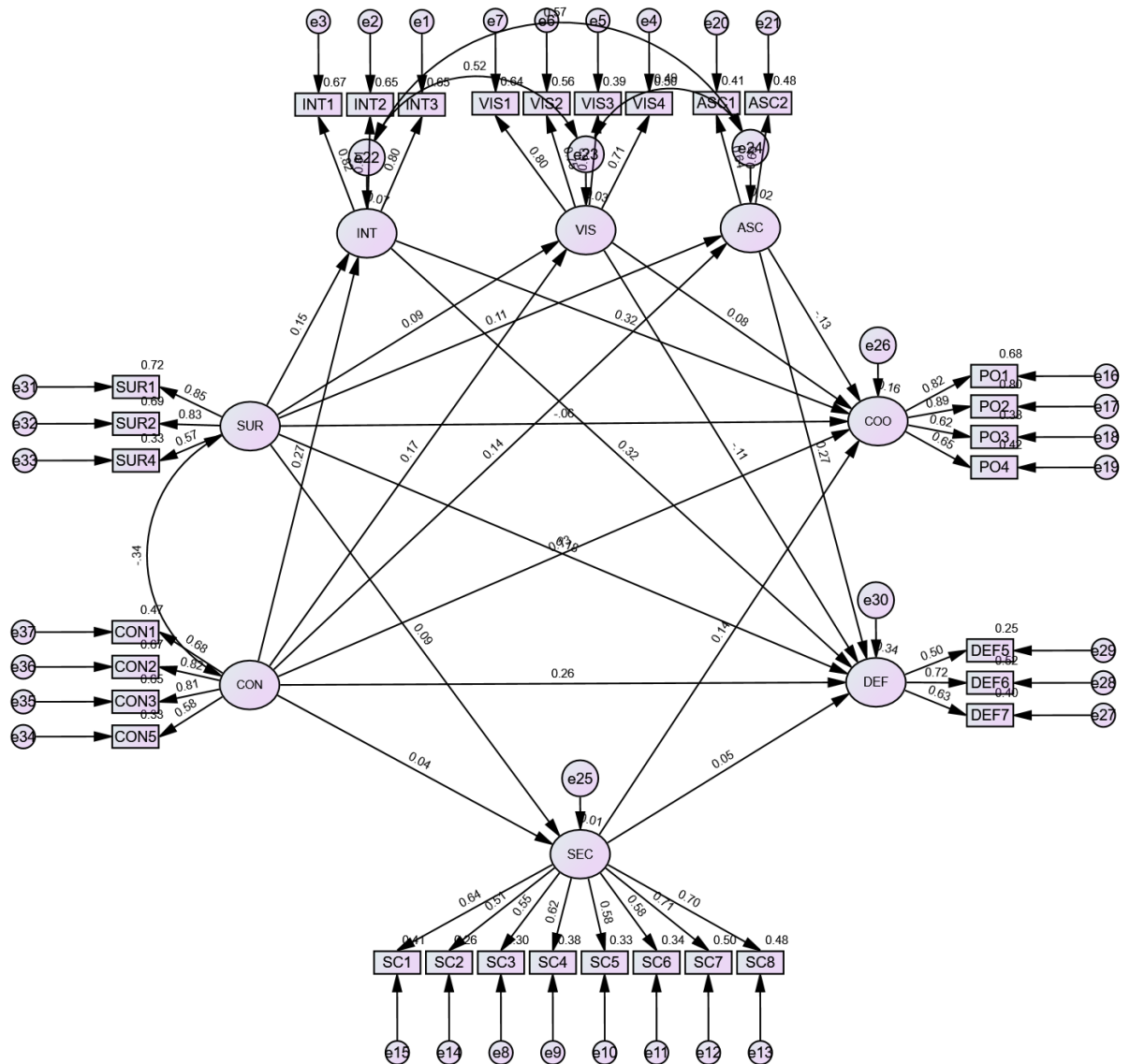


Figure 11. MODEL II: Digital Control Mechanisms and Police Cooperation Model

5.4.2.2. Effects of Perceived Control on Social Media on Police Cooperation Intention

In this section, the relationship between perceived control on social media and intention to cooperate with the police is examined. The direct and mediated pathways of this relationship are presented under separate subheadings.

5.4.2.2.1. The Direct Effect of Perceived Control on Social Media on Police Cooperation Intention

The findings indicate that perceived control on social media had a positive and statistically significant direct effect on intention to cooperate with the police ($\beta = .135$, $t = 2.174$, $p = .030$). Descriptively, perceived control on social media was moderate ($M = 3.14$), whereas intention to cooperate with the police was relatively high ($M = 4.02$). Although cooperation intention was generally high across the sample, higher perceived control on social media was still linked to stronger intentions to cooperate with the police.

In this study, perceived control on social media refers to the extent to which respondents felt able to manage their privacy and actions on social media. It does not capture users' control over the technical operation of platforms or algorithms. Users may feel they have control over their online actions while platforms continue to influence how information is collected and processed.

This positive direct effect is broadly consistent with research on digital platforms, where perceived control has been linked to users' behavioural intentions. Hajli and Lin (2016) found that perceived control of information on social networking sites was positively related to users' intentions to share information. Hansen et al. (2018) also found that perceived behavioural control had a significant positive effect on intention to use social networking services for transactions. Although the contexts differ, the present finding is part of a wider literature on perceived control and behavioural intention in digital settings.

In this study, cooperation intention involves sharing information with the police, cooperating during an incident, and supporting the maintenance of public order. Police forces use social media to circulate information, maintain contact with citizens, and seek public assistance with policing activities (Boateng & Chenane, 2020; Dai et al., 2017). Perceived control on social media may make cooperation with the police appear more manageable. If individuals feel able to control what they share and how they take part online, cooperation with the police may seem less risky. This significant direct

effect should be interpreted at the level of cooperation intention, not as evidence of actual reporting behaviour or direct communication with police forces.

From a governmentality perspective, perceived control on social media is tied to the wider organisation of online conduct. Drawing on Foucault (2007), governmentality describes how conduct is guided through the conditions in which people act. Brandimarte et al. (2013) show that perceived control can increase users' willingness to disclose information, even when they have limited control over how that information is later accessed or used by others. Badouard et al. (2016) add a related point about digital environments. Online action is often organised through technical resources such as software, algorithms, and operating systems. In this sense, the positive direct effect of perceived control on social media cannot be reduced to individual autonomy. Perceived control may make cooperation with the police seem more voluntary and less uncertain, even though this sense of control is formed within platform environments that influence how users manage their information. Perceived control on social media can be understood as users' sense that they can manage their online activity within the limits set by social media platforms.

Overall, perceived control on social media had a positive and significant direct effect on cooperation intention. This suggests that respondents who felt more able to manage their privacy and online behaviour also reported stronger intentions to cooperate with the police. The effect concerns respondents' perceived control, not their actual control over platform processes.

5.4.2.2.2. The Mediating Role of Perceived Social Media Affordances in the Effect of Perceived Control on Police Cooperation Intention

In Model II, perceived interaction significantly mediated the relationship between perceived control on social media and intention to cooperate with the police ($p < .001$). The indirect effects through perceived visibility ($p = .227$) and perceived association ($p = .139$) were not significant. Among the tested mediating pathways, perceived interaction was the affordance dimension through which perceived control was linked to cooperation intention.

Table 35. Model II: Mediated Effects on Police Cooperation Intention

User-defined estimand	Estimate	95% CI		p-value
		Lower	Upper	
Perceived control to police cooperation intention via perceived interaction	.085	.037	.172	< .001
Perceived control to police cooperation intention via perceived visibility	.014	-.008	.070	.227
Perceived control to police cooperation intention via perceived association	-.017	-.074	.006	.139

This mediation result indicates that perceived control on social media was related to cooperation intention when users also perceived social media as a space for response and participation. In this pathway, perceived interaction gives the sense of control a communicative form. Feeling able to manage one’s online behaviour may support the intention to cooperate when social media is also seen as a space where people can participate and engage with others.

Research on social media participation provides a useful basis for interpreting this finding. Chun and Lee (2017) show that perceived sense of power/control helps explain why users become more willing to speak out on social media, including sharing opinions and commenting on posts. Xu et al. (2019) conceptualise perceived interactivity through action control, connectedness, and responsiveness, and find that these dimensions are related to users’ intention to participate in future online interactions. From a broader communication perspective, Shan et al. (2015) show that social media can support listening, feedback, participation, and dialogue between public organisations and citizens, although such platforms are not always used beyond one-way information delivery. These studies support the interpretation that perceived interaction was the affordance most closely connected to active participation in this relationship.

Perceived visibility and perceived association did not significantly mediate the relationship between perceived control on social media and intention to cooperate with the police. One possible explanation is that these affordances are less directly

actionable from the user's perspective than interaction. Visibility may increase users' exposure to police-related content and public reactions on social media. Association can display connections among users and between users and content (Treem & Leonardi, 2013). In the policing context, Bullock et al. (2021) show that social media may create opportunities for reach and connection, but citizen engagement does not follow automatically from these affordances. These two affordances may position users as observers rather than participants. Perceived interaction is more closely related to what users can actively do, such as commenting, exchanging views, or taking part in communication.

Overall, the mediation analysis indicates that perceived control on social media was most relevant to cooperation intention when it was connected with perceived interaction. The important point is that interaction gives users an active role in communication. Seeing police-related content or being connected to others may provide awareness or a sense of connection, but it does not necessarily involve taking part in communication.

5.4.2.3. Perceived Surveillance on Social Media and Police Cooperation Intention

In this section, the relationships between perceived surveillance on social media and intentions to cooperate with the police are examined. The direct and mediated effects are presented under separate subheadings.

5.4.2.3.1. Direct Effect of Perceived Surveillance on Social Media on Police Cooperation Intention

Perceived surveillance on social media did not have a significant direct effect on intention to cooperate with the police in Model II ($\beta = -.064$, $t = -1.083$, $p = .279$). Descriptively, participants reported a moderate level of perceived surveillance on social media ($M = 3.29$). The non-significant direct effect indicates that feeling monitored on social media did not directly predict cooperation intention in this model. Feeling monitored online may still be relevant to how individuals behave on social media, but this was not reflected in a direct effect on cooperation intention.

In this study, perceived surveillance on social media refers to respondents' sense that their activities on social media may be monitored by organisations, other users, or algorithmic systems. The construct concerns perceived surveillance, not verified or objectively measured surveillance practices. Surveillance on social media may not always be visible or directly experienced. It may instead be inferred from how platforms collect data, recommend content, moderate activity, or make users aware that their online behaviour can be observed.

In the UK context, perceived surveillance on social media is connected to wider developments in digital policing. Bullock (2018) discusses how police forces use social media in their communication with the public. Dencik et al. (2015) describe social media data as a source of open-source intelligence, particularly for threat identification and risk assessment. Law enforcement agencies also make use of large datasets and Big Data systems to support safeguarding, crime reduction, and public safety (Stanier, 2016). However, the presence of social media monitoring and data-driven policing practices does not necessarily imply that individuals will report stronger intentions to cooperate with the police. Cooperation intention may depend more on how surveillance is understood and evaluated by the public than on the existence of surveillance itself.

Research on visible surveillance technologies provides a useful contrast with the present finding. Wu et al. (2021) found that the presence of surveillance cameras was positively associated with willingness to cooperate with the police. Hevi et al. (2022) also show that perceptions of police use of surveillance cameras are linked to police legitimacy through procedural justice, highlighting the role of fairness in how surveillance is evaluated. In the case of CCTV surveillance, Piza et al. (2019) found that its crime-reduction effect was significant but modest. Even visible surveillance technologies do not produce uniform or automatic effects. Camera-based surveillance is generally tied to a visible device and a more recognisable security purpose. Perceived surveillance on social media, however, is more ambiguous. It is more dispersed, less observable, and often inferred from platform experiences rather than directly seen. Therefore, perceived surveillance on social media may be less likely to directly support the intention to cooperate with the police.

Perceived surveillance remains relevant to the discussion, but not as a direct predictor of cooperation intention. Feeling monitored on social media may still be related to how individuals understand and manage their online behaviour, but it does not necessarily create a stronger intention to cooperate with the police. In this model, perceived surveillance is better understood as part of the wider digital context in which cooperation intention is formed, without directly increasing cooperation intention.

5.4.2.3.2. The Mediating Role of Perceived Social Media Affordances in the Relationship between Perceived Surveillance on Social Media and Police Cooperation Intention

Table 36 presents the indirect effects of perceived surveillance on social media on the intention to cooperate with the police, mediated by perceived social media affordances.

Table 36. Model II: Mediated Effects on Police Cooperation Intention

User-defined estimand	Estimate	95% CI		p-value
		Lower	Upper	
Perceived surveillance to police cooperation intention via perceived interaction	.029	.006	.070	.014
Perceived surveillance to police cooperation intention via perceived visibility	.004	-.003	.026	.250
Perceived surveillance to police cooperation intention via perceived association	-.008	-.040	.004	.170

In Model II, perceived interaction significantly mediated the relationship between perceived surveillance on social media and intention to cooperate with the police ($p = .014$). The indirect effects through perceived visibility ($p = .250$) and perceived association ($p = .170$) were not significant. Although perceived surveillance did not have a significant direct effect on cooperation intention, it had an indirect effect on cooperation intention through perceived interaction. In other words, perceived surveillance was linked to cooperation intention through perceived interaction, especially when users perceived social media as a space for communication. Interaction may support participation, but it can also make users' actions visible and open to monitoring.

Perceived interaction does more than enable users to take part in communication. It also allows them to leave digital traces and makes their online actions observable. Commenting, liking, sharing, or replying can turn users from passive content consumers into actors who produce traceable data.

This indirect effect through interaction can be understood in relation to how surveillance operates on social media. Lyon (2018) conceptualises surveillance as more than passive watching, describing it as a purposeful form of attention to people's everyday lives that may influence, manage, protect, or guide behaviour. Marwick (2012) argues that social media users often adjust their online behaviour with a possible audience in mind, and that digital self-presentation is closely tied to social surveillance. Putri et al. (2025) note that platforms can analyse users' actions on social media and use this data for personalised content and predictive analytics. Perceived interaction affordance brings perceived surveillance closer to users' own actions, responses, and communicative choices on social media. This suggests that perceived surveillance shapes police cooperation intention indirectly through users' interaction-based experiences on social media.

Dencik et al. (2015) show how social media data can be used within digital policing and open-source intelligence in the UK. Their report indicates that, particularly during protests and public order events, such data can support situational awareness, risk assessment, the monitoring of expressions that may be interpreted as threats, and the identification of influential actors. This gives the interaction pathway a specific policing context, because users' online interactions may enter wider systems of monitoring and interpretation.

For Foucault, surveillance can work without direct coercion. The possibility of being observed may be enough to make individuals regulate their own conduct (Foucault, 1992). On social media, users' actions leave traces that can be observed and interpreted. Ceyhan (2012) links contemporary data-based surveillance to risk management and the regulation of potentially risky behaviour. Empirical studies point in a similar direction, showing that surveillance can affect behavioural responses and online behavioural intentions (O'Connor & Jahan, 2014; Stoycheff et al., 2019). Users may respond differently to perceived surveillance, depending on the context and their

motivations for participation. In this study, this relationship was assessed at the level of intention to cooperate with the police, not at the level of actual cooperative behaviour.

Perceived visibility and perceived association did not mediate the relationship between perceived surveillance and intention to cooperate with the police. According to Treem and Leonardi (2013), visibility refers to the way social media makes individuals' actions and knowledge accessible to others, while association affordance concerns the connections formed among individuals and with content. Visibility may make users more aware that their content or actions can be seen or monitored. However, this awareness may leave users as observers rather than active participants in cooperation with the police. Association affordance may bring users into contact with police-related content or networks, but this form of connection does not necessarily involve reciprocal communication or an active role for users. As a result, it may be less likely to strengthen cooperation intention.

5.4.2.4. Perceived Control on Social Media and Digital Efficacy

In this section, the association between perceived control on social media and digital efficacy is examined. The results are presented by first outlining the direct effect and then considering the mediating role of perceived social media affordances in this relationship.

5.4.2.4.1. The Direct Effect of Perceived Control on Social Media on Digital Efficacy

The SEM results show that perceived control on social media had a significant positive direct effect on digital efficacy ($\beta = .258, t = 3.566, p < .001$). In this study, perceived control on social media refers to users' sense that they can manage their online presence, privacy, and behaviour on these platforms. This finding suggests that users report stronger digital efficacy when they experience social media as a manageable environment. When users feel that they can manage their presence and privacy on social media, they may feel less uncertain and find it easier to navigate. This sense of control can support conscious and strategic participation on social media and may

make users feel more able to communicate with others and take part in collective online activity.

The UK is a useful case for examining the relationship between social media, surveillance, and digital behaviour. According to Digital 2024: The United Kingdom, there were 66.33 million internet users in the UK at the start of 2024, with internet penetration reaching 97.8%. The same report states that there were 56.20 million social media user identities in the UK, equivalent to 82.8% of the total population, while also noting that these user identities may not represent unique individuals (Kemp, 2024). Ofcom (2024) also shows that social media has become an important source of news. In 2024, more than half of UK adults used social media as a news source, with this figure rising to 82% among adults aged 16–24. This reflects Curtice et al.'s (2025) observation that social media is embedded in everyday life in Britain, where people use these platforms to follow news feeds, engage with debates, comment on public issues, and repost content. These data show that social media is not a marginal or occasional space in the UK. Social media has become a routine digital environment where people communicate, encounter news, and engage with public and political issues. However, the widespread use of social media does not mean that users feel in control in this environment. High levels of access and use may create more opportunities for communication and participation, but access alone does not translate into digital efficacy.

Social media platforms may facilitate communication and participation, but they can also make users' actions open to monitoring. When users feel unable to manage their data use, or the way platforms shape what they see, social media may feel riskier and harder to control. In this sense, perceived control may reduce uncertainty around participation and support users' belief that they can act with others online. Overall, this finding suggests that digital efficacy cannot be explained by access to social media or frequency of use alone. In the UK context, where social media is widely used for communication and engagement with public issues, users' sense of control over their behaviour and participation appears to be important for how they perceive their capacity to act with others in digital spaces. This finding positions digital efficacy as

a perception of collective digital capacity that also depends on users' sense of control in social media environments.

5.4.2.4.2. The Mediating Role of Perceived Social Media Affordances in the Relationship between Perceived Control and Digital Efficacy

The SEM results show that perceived interaction significantly mediated the relationship between perceived control on social media and digital efficacy ($p = .005$). The indirect effects through perceived visibility and perceived association were not significant. Since perceived control also had a significant direct effect on digital efficacy, perceived interaction affordance provides an indirect pathway between the two. This indicates that perceived control on social media was related to digital efficacy both directly and indirectly through perceived interaction affordance.

Table 37. Model II: Mediated Effects on Digital Efficacy

User-defined estimand	Estimate	95% CI		p-value
		Lower	Upper	
Perceived control to digital efficacy via perceived interaction	.065	.015	.071	.005
Perceived control to digital efficacy via perceived visibility	-.015	-.060	.002	.089
Perceived control to digital efficacy via perceived association	.028	-.001	.095	.057

Perceived interaction affordance shows how an individual's sense of control on social media can become communicative and collective. Digital efficacy involves feeling able to communicate with others, respond to them, and participate in collective online activities. For this reason, interaction affordance stands out as the mechanism through which perceived control becomes a perceived capacity to act with others in digital spaces.

Interaction does not occur in a neutral space. Users may take cues from others' behaviour when deciding what is appropriate or possible on social media. Masur et al. (2021) show that prevalent behaviours on social network sites can shape perceived social norms and subsequent user behaviour. This process may also be influenced by

platform algorithms, which affect which posts and interactions users encounter. Gillespie (2014) argues that algorithms help determine what is treated as relevant and shape how people participate in public discourse. Therefore, perceived interaction may strengthen digital efficacy by helping users feel able to act with others in a social media environment shaped by social cues and platform algorithms.

Perceived visibility affordance concerns whether users' content, comments, or actions can be seen by others. However, seeing or being seen does not necessarily give users a sense that they can influence others or act collectively online. For some users, visibility may increase a feeling of being monitored rather than empowered. Platform filtering and ranking may also affect what users actually see, meaning that visibility is not always fully under users' control (Rader & Gray, 2015). Visibility may increase awareness of others and their actions, but this alone does not necessarily strengthen digital efficacy.

The indirect effect of perceived control on digital efficacy through perceived association was not statistically significant. Although association may connect users to people or networks, this form of connection may not be the mechanism through which users' sense of control becomes a perceived capacity to participate collectively. The results point to the importance of interaction in linking users' perceptions of control to digital efficacy.

5.4.2.5. Perceived Surveillance on Social Media and Digital Efficacy

In this section, the relationship between perceived surveillance and digital efficacy is examined. The direct effect is presented first, followed by the mediation of this relationship through perceived social media affordances.

5.4.2.5.1. Direct Effect of Perceived Surveillance on Social Media on Digital Efficacy

The SEM results indicate that perceived surveillance on social media had a significant positive direct effect on digital efficacy ($\beta = .181, t = 2.703, p = .007$). In other words, users who perceived greater surveillance on social media also reported higher levels of digital efficacy. Since the outcome variable is digital efficacy, this positive effect

should be interpreted as evidence of a stronger perceived capacity to act collectively in digital spaces, rather than as evidence of actual online participation.

Existing studies often associate perceptions of surveillance with caution, behavioural adjustment, or chilling effects (O'Connor & Jahan, 2014; Stoycheff et al., 2019). However, the positive direct effect found in this study indicates a complex relationship between perceived surveillance and digital efficacy. This finding suggests that perceived surveillance on social media can coexist with digital efficacy. For some users, it may be associated with a clearer sense of the boundaries and possible consequences of online action. This clarity may help users assess how to act on social media and maintain a belief that they can act with others online.

The wider literature suggests that the social effects of surveillance do not move in a single direction. Wu et al. (2021) find that camera surveillance in China was positively associated with willingness to cooperate with the police, with this effect being stronger in neighbourhoods with high collective efficacy. Takagi et al. (2022) show that surveillance can produce different outcomes. In Japan, participants who were aware of security cameras reported greater trust in others, but perceived lower levels of neighbourhood social cohesion. Walsh and O'Connor (2019) emphasise similar dynamics in the context of social media and policing. Social media may expand police surveillance, but it can also give citizens the opportunity to observe police conduct, share incidents they perceive as unjust, and organise collectively online.

In the UK context, social media has become a space for public and political discussion. Twitter, for example, provides a channel for direct interaction between MPs and citizens, even though MPs respond selectively and often prioritise UK-based or constituency-related users (Agarwal et al., 2019). During the 2017 general election, Twitter discussion was also strongly shaped by external events, media debates, and promoted hashtags, showing how quickly public attention can change around political issues (Cram et al., 2017). In this kind of environment, perceived surveillance may accompany a careful and purposeful sense of users' capacity to act collectively online.

Drawing on Lyon's (2017) account of surveillance culture, surveillance is no longer an external force imposed on everyday life; it has become an everyday condition that

people may comply with, negotiate, resist, and, in some cases, help to reproduce. In this study, the positive effect of perceived surveillance on digital efficacy does not mean that surveillance is directly empowering or that being watched increases participation. Perceived surveillance on social media can become part of how some users interpret and navigate digital environments, while they still maintain a belief that they can act together with others online. The findings suggest that, for some users, perceived surveillance may shape how they assess the possibilities for collective action in digital spaces.

5.4.2.5.2. The Mediating Role of Perceived Social Media Affordances in the Relationship Between Perceived Surveillance on Social Media and Digital Efficacy

The SEM results show that perceived interaction significantly mediated the relationship between perceived surveillance on social media and digital efficacy ($p = .019$). The indirect effects through perceived visibility and perceived association were not significant. Because perceived surveillance also had a significant direct effect on digital efficacy, this result indicates that perceived surveillance was associated with digital efficacy both directly and indirectly through perceived interaction.

Table 38. Model II: Mediated Effects on Digital Efficacy

User-defined estimand	Estimate	95% CI		p-value
		Lower	Upper	
Perceived surveillance to digital efficacy via perceived interaction	.022	.003	.069	.019
Perceived surveillance to digital efficacy via perceived visibility	-.005	-.022	.002	.155
Perceived surveillance to digital efficacy via perceived association	.013	-.003	.057	.109

Perceived interaction affordance connects perceived surveillance with users' sense of online communication and their ability to act with others. In this way, perceived surveillance is not limited to a passive feeling of being watched. When users perceive social media as an interactive space, perceived surveillance may become part of a more manageable online experience. In this case, users may take the risks of being visible

into account while also recognising that their words or responses can reach others. In this sense, perceived interaction creates an active communicative channel through which the perception of being surveilled becomes linked to users' belief that their online responses can reach others and have collective relevance.

Albrechtslund's (2008) concept of participatory surveillance treats surveillance in online social networking as more than a hierarchical relation of control, framing it as a process in which users participate through sharing, visibility and social interaction. On social media, interaction creates a space in which users may share and connect with others while remaining aware that they may be watched. The same communicative environment can support participation while also making users open to surveillance. This interpretation supports the interaction pathway found in the model.

The non-significant mediation results indicate that perceived visibility and perceived association did not explain the indirect pathway between perceived surveillance and digital efficacy. In the context of surveillance, visibility may increase users' awareness that their content or actions can be monitored. However, this visibility may not contribute to users' perceived ability to act with others online. Gibbs et al. (2013) show that social media affordances can support engagement while also creating tensions around visibility and control. Association may be important for digital efficacy in general. When perceived surveillance is involved, being connected may not develop into a sense of collective agency. From a surveillance standpoint, connections may also make users feel traceable or identifiable within a wider network. In this model, the pathway from perceived surveillance to digital efficacy was significant through perceived interaction. Perceived interaction offers a direct experience in which users actively communicate and feel that they can make a contribution.

Overall, these findings suggest that perceived surveillance on social media is not limited to an awareness of being watched. Through perceived interaction, it becomes connected to how users perceive their capacity to communicate with others and act together in digital spaces. Digital efficacy appears to be linked to whether users perceive opportunities for interaction even under conditions of perceived surveillance.

5.4.2.6. The Mediating Effect of Self-Censorship on Social Media

The SEM results indicate that self-censorship on social media did not significantly mediate any of the tested relationships in Model II. The indirect effects through self-censorship were non-significant for the pathways from perceived control and perceived surveillance on social media to both digital efficacy and police cooperation intention.

Table 39. Mediating Effects of Self-Censorship on Social Media

User-defined estimand	Estimate	95% CI		p-value
		Lower	Upper	
Perceived control to digital efficacy via self-censorship	.001	-.004	.022	.389
Perceived control to police cooperation intention via self-censorship	.006	-.013	.032	.419
Perceived surveillance to digital efficacy via self-censorship	.002	-.002	.015	.280
Perceived surveillance to police cooperation intention via self-censorship	.008	-.002	.027	.098

This finding does not mean that self-censorship is irrelevant to police cooperation. In Model I, self-censorship mediated the relationships between police-related perceptions and police cooperation intention. Therefore, the non-significant result here indicates that the relationships in Model II operate through a different logic. In Model II, the independent variables are perceived control and perceived surveillance on social media. Instead of fully restricting their expression, users may manage visibility, privacy, and interaction by adjusting what they share, who can see it, or how they engage with others online. In this respect, self-censorship does not appear to be a mediator between perceived control or perceived surveillance and the outcome variables in this model.

Perceived control refers to users' sense that they can manage their privacy and behaviour on social media. In this context, a sense of control may lead users to view social media use as manageable, rather than making self-censorship the main response. Users may respond to concerns about visibility by using platform-level tools, such as

privacy settings, audience restrictions, or private channels. Wang et al. (2011) found that social media users respond to regrettable posts through corrective privacy practices, including deleting content, removing photo tags, and adjusting privacy settings. These examples suggest that users may manage the visibility and consequences of online expression through privacy-related actions, while still maintaining a sense of control over how they act online.

A similar interpretation can be applied to perceived surveillance. Perceived surveillance on social media may lead users to behave carefully or selectively. However, this does not always take the form of self-censorship. Instead of restricting their expression altogether, users may manage visibility, privacy, and interaction by adjusting what they share, who can see it, or how they engage with others online. In Duffy and Chan's (2019) study, imagined surveillance shaped how users managed their audiences, posts, and identity links through privacy settings, self-monitoring, and pseudonymous accounts. From this perspective, the relationship between perceived surveillance and digital efficacy or police cooperation intention was not mediated by self-censorship in Model II. In this model, perceived surveillance appears to be more closely related to behavioural adjustment and online self-management than to silence.

In the UK, social media is part of everyday communication, while also bringing users into contact with public debates and police-related content. Self-censorship may therefore depend on the issue being discussed, the audience being imagined, and the platform being used. Marwick and boyd's (2011) study of Twitter users shows that users manage what they say by considering different audience groups, concealing certain topics, and presenting themselves in ways they consider appropriate. A broad measure of self-censorship may not fully capture more selective forms of expression developed in relation to specific topics, audiences, or platforms. In Table 39, the pathway from perceived surveillance to police cooperation intention via self-censorship was not significant ($p = .098$) and therefore cannot be interpreted as a supported mediation effect. However, this result points to the need for research to examine self-censorship with measures that are more sensitive to specific issues and audiences.

These results show that self-censorship on social media did not operate as a significant mediator in Model II. This finding indicates that the relationships among perceived control, perceived surveillance, digital efficacy, and police cooperation intention were not explained by users becoming silent or withdrawing from online expression on social media. The studies discussed above also suggest that users may respond to perceptions of control and surveillance by selectively managing their privacy, visibility, audiences, and interactions. However, since these behaviours were not directly measured in this study, this interpretation remains a possible explanation of the non-significant mediation result.

5.4.3. From Perceived Social Media Affordances to Digital Efficacy

This separate SEM model was conducted to test the hypotheses concerning the direct relationships between perceived social media affordances and digital efficacy. The model examined whether perceived interaction, perceived visibility, and perceived association had direct effects on digital efficacy. The SEM results indicated that the model had acceptable goodness-of-fit values: CMIN = 142.428, $\chi^2/df = 2.967$, CFI = .94, TLI = .92, AGFI = .90, SRMR = .05, RMSEA = .06. The digital efficacy model tested in this analysis is shown in Figure 12, and the model fit values are presented in Table 40.

Table 40. Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Additional Digital Efficacy Model

	CMIN	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	AGFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model Fit	142.428	2.967	.94	.92	.90	.05	.06

Model Fit: χ^2 : 142.428, df: 48, $p \leq .001$, CFI: .94, TLI: .92, AGFI: .90, RMSEA: .06, SRMR: .05

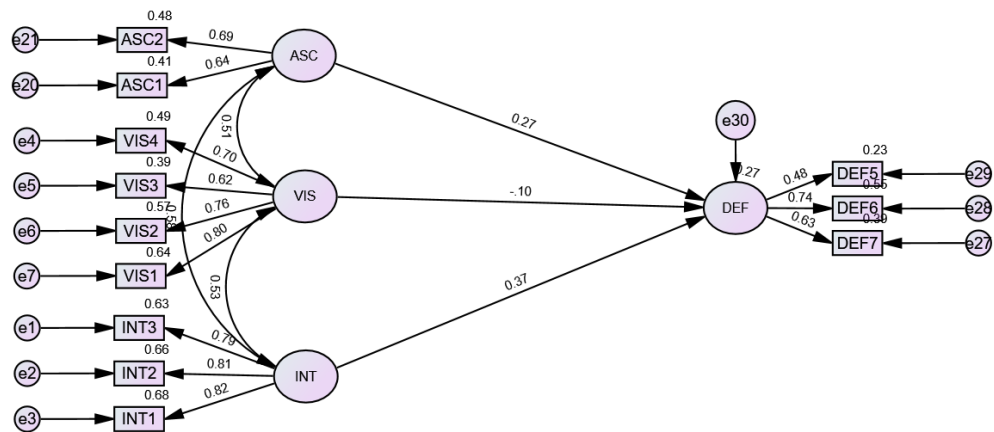


Figure 12. Digital Efficacy Model

The findings show that perceived interaction affordance had a strong positive direct effect on digital efficacy ($\beta = .372, p < .001$). Perceived association affordance also had a positive and significant direct effect on digital efficacy ($\beta = .268, p = .013$). By contrast, the direct effect of perceived visibility affordance on digital efficacy was not significant ($p = .220$).

Table 41. Direct Effects on Digital Efficacy

Structural Relations	Std. β	t-value	p-value
Perceived Interaction \rightarrow Digital Efficacy	.372	3.918	< .001
Perceived Visibility \rightarrow Digital Efficacy	-.101	-1.227	.220
Perceived Association \rightarrow Digital Efficacy	.268	2.492	.013

The positive effect of perceived interaction affordance on digital efficacy may be related to users' sense that they can communicate directly with others. On social media, the ability to comment, respond, share, and receive responses can make individuals feel that they are not acting alone in digital environments. In this respect, interaction is directly connected to the core meaning of digital efficacy: the perceived ability to act with others and contribute to shared goals. Brainard and Edlins (2015) state that information transmission alone is not sufficient for collaboration through

social media; interaction and sustained dialogue are also necessary. In addition, Lu et al. (2024) show that social media-based knowledge sharing and socialising empowerment can strengthen individuals' perceived collective efficacy. These points provide a basis for interpreting the strong direct effect of perceived interaction affordance on digital efficacy in this model.

The significant effect of perceived association affordance on digital efficacy can be interpreted through users' ability to see themselves as connected to people, content, and groups on social media. Association connects users with like-minded others, shared goals, and supportive networks. Treem and Leonardi (2013) state that association affordance makes connections between people, as well as relationships between users and content, more visible in social media environments. This may help users feel that they can act as part of a particular network in digital spaces. Lüders et al. (2022) further argue that social media affordances can support the formation of collective identity through community development, the formation of shared norms, and emotional alignment. In this sense, perceived association affordance contributes to digital efficacy by giving users a sense of connection to others within a wider network. This connection can also be seen in hashtag use. Through hashtags, users can signal affiliation with particular causes and connect their posts to the content of other users (Lüders et al., 2022).

The non-significant direct effect of perceived visibility affordance on digital efficacy indicates that being visible alone does not produce a sense of collective digital capacity. In this study, the level of perceived visibility was relatively high ($M = 4.06$), which may indicate that respondents recognised that their content and interactions on social media could be seen by others. However, being seen or being able to see others' content does not directly strengthen users' belief that they can act with others. Visibility can create awareness, but it can also be associated with surveillance, being watched, or passive observation. Therefore, perceived visibility does not appear to be an explanatory factor for digital efficacy in this structural model.

The results extend this discussion by showing which perceived social media affordances significantly predict digital efficacy in this model. Shirky (2011) states that social media provides individuals with access to information, opportunities to

engage in public speech, and the capacity to coordinate collective action. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) argue that loose networks formed through digital media can enable forms of connective action through personalised content sharing. Earl et al. (2013) show that Twitter was used during protests to share real-time information about protest locations and police activity, supporting coordination among protesters. The findings of the present study make this discussion more specific. Among UK respondents, perceived interaction and perceived association are stronger predictors of digital efficacy in this model, whereas perceived visibility does not have the same explanatory role. This finding differs from the follow-up SEM on police cooperation intention, where perceived interaction was the main affordance predictor. Digital efficacy, by contrast, was predicted by both perceived interaction and perceived association. This suggests that police cooperation intention is more closely tied to reciprocal communication and participation, while digital efficacy involves both this communicative dimension and users' sense of being connected within digital networks and collective relations. This additional model provides an affordance-based explanation of digital efficacy.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter brings together the findings from the two structural models and discusses how police–community cooperation is shaped in the context of social media. The thesis examined the direct and indirect relationships among policing perceptions, digital control mechanisms, perceived social media affordances, social media self-censorship, and intention to cooperate with the police. The chapter synthesises what the two models show about police–community cooperation and users’ perceived capacity to act collectively on social media. It then summarises these relationships and discusses their theoretical and practical implications before considering the study’s limitations and priorities for future research.

Digital efficacy is treated as one of the thesis’s central conceptual contributions. The concept refers to users’ perceived capacity to act with others on social media and to contribute effectively to shared goals in digital environments. Through the concept of digital efficacy, this thesis shows how perceived collective capacity online can be examined in relation to perceived control, perceived surveillance, and perceived social media affordances. This discussion draws on the empirical findings presented in Chapter 5 and clarifies the place of digital efficacy within the overall contribution of the thesis.

6.2. A Structural Model of Police–Community Cooperation in the Social Media Context

Table 42 summarises the hypothesis testing results for the two structural models, showing which relationships were supported, not supported, or not tested. It provides an overview of the direct and indirect pathways tested between the main constructs in the two models. It serves as a bridge between the statistical findings reported in Chapter 5 and the implications discussed in this chapter.

Table 42. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Results
H1: Higher perceived police trust has a positive effect on intention to cooperate with the police.	Supported (via combined construct). ¹
H2: Higher perceived police legitimacy has a positive effect on intention to cooperate with the police.	Not tested. ²
H3: Higher perceived procedural justice has a positive effect on intention to cooperate with the police.	Supported (via combined construct). ¹
H4: Higher perceived police effectiveness has a positive effect on intention to cooperate with the police.	Not supported.
H5: (a) Visibility, (b) interaction, (c) association, and (d) persistence affordances positively mediate the effects of perceived procedural justice, perceived trust, perceived legitimacy, and perceived police effectiveness on intention to cooperate with the police.	H5(a) Not supported. H5(b) Not supported. H5(c) Not supported. H5(d) Not tested. ³
H6: Self-censorship on social media negatively mediates the effects of (a) trust, (b) procedural justice, (c) legitimacy, and (d) police effectiveness on intention to cooperate with the police.	H6(a/b) Significant, but in the opposite direction via combined construct. ¹ H6(c) Not tested. ² H6(d) Supported.
H7: Perceived data justice on social media has a positive effect on intention to cooperate with the police.	Not tested. ⁴

¹ Although the hypotheses related to “perceived trust in police,” “perceived legitimacy,” and “perceived procedural justice” were conceptually developed as separate constructs, the results of the factor analysis indicated that “perceived procedural justice” and “perceived trust” loaded onto a single dimension. For this reason, combining these dimensions into a single structure was deemed methodologically more appropriate. Consequently, these variables were analysed as a single construct titled “Perceived Procedural Justice and Trust”, and the related hypotheses were tested based on this combined structure.

² Of the five items intended to measure “perceived police legitimacy,” four displayed low factor loadings, indicating that a valid construct could not be established. The remaining item (“I have great respect for the local police”) loaded onto the “Perceived Procedural Justice and Trust” dimension, and therefore could not be treated as a separate construct.

³ The measurement items for the variable “Persistence Affordance” did not demonstrate sufficient factor loadings in the factor analysis. Therefore, this variable was excluded from the structural model, and the parts of the hypotheses related to it (labelled as sub-hypothesis “d”) were not tested.

⁴ The measurement items for the variable “Perceived Data Justice” did not demonstrate sufficient factor loadings in the factor analysis. Therefore, this variable was excluded from the structural model, and the parts of the hypotheses related to it (labelled as sub-hypothesis “c”) were not tested.

Hypothesis	Results
H8: Perceived control on social media has a positive effect on intention to cooperate with the police.	Supported.
H9: Perceived surveillance on social media has a negative effect on intention to cooperate with the police.	Not supported.
H10: (a) Visibility, (b) interaction, (c) association, and (d) persistence affordances have positive direct effects on digital efficacy.	H10(a) Not supported. H10(b) Supported. H10(c) Supported. H10(d) Not tested. ³
H11: (a) Visibility, (b) interaction, (c) association, and (d) persistence affordances mediate the effect of perceived surveillance on social media on intention to cooperate with the police.	H11(a) Not supported. H11(b) Supported. H11(c) Not supported. H11(d) Not tested. ³
H12: (a) Visibility, (b) interaction, (c) association, and (d) persistence affordances mediate the effect of perceived control on social media on intention to cooperate with the police.	H12(a) No supported. H12(b) Supported. H12(c) Not supported. H12(d) Not tested. ³
H13: (a) Visibility, (b) interaction, (c) association, and (d) persistence affordances mediate the effect of perceived data justice on social media on intention to cooperate with the police.	Not tested. ⁴
H14: (a) Perceived surveillance on social media has a negative direct effect on digital efficacy, (b) perceived control on social media has a positive direct effect on digital efficacy, and (c) perceived data justice on social media has a positive direct effect on digital efficacy.	H14(a) Not supported; significant positive effect found. H14(b) Supported. H14(c) Not tested. ⁴
H15: (a) Visibility, (b) interaction, (c) association, and (d) persistence affordances mediate the effects of perceived surveillance, perceived control, and perceived data justice on social media on digital efficacy.	H15(a) Not supported. H15(b) Supported for perceived control and perceived surveillance; data justice not tested. ⁴ H15(c) Not supported. H15(d) Not tested. ³

Hypothesis	Results
H16: Self-censorship on social media mediates the effects of (a) perceived control, (b) perceived surveillance, and (c) perceived data justice on social media on intention to cooperate with the police.	H16(a) Not supported. H16(b) Not supported. H16(c) Not tested. ⁴
H17: Self-censorship on social media mediates the effects of (a) perceived control, (b) perceived surveillance, and (c) perceived data justice on social media on digital efficacy.	H17(a) Not supported. H17(b) Not supported. H17(c) Not tested. ⁴

6.2.1. Policing Perceptions and Digitally Mediated Cooperation Model

Model I examined the relationship between perceptions of policing and intention to cooperate with the police in the context of social media, assessing how this relationship was shaped by perceived social media affordances and self-censorship. The findings show that the perceived procedural justice and trust was the strongest predictor of intention to cooperate with the police. This result indicates that intention to cooperate with the police is linked less to a general sense of responsibility for public order than to citizens' evaluations of how the police use their authority, particularly whether they perceive police decision-making as fair and police treatment as respectful and trustworthy. This finding is consistent with Tyler's (2003) process-based model, which emphasises fair decision-making and respectful treatment as central to public cooperation with legal authorities. Jackson et al. (2012) similarly show, in the UK context, that trust in police procedural fairness is linked to legitimacy and willingness to cooperate with the police.

In Model I, the prominence of procedural justice and trust as the main factor influencing citizens' intention to cooperate with the police highlights how trust should be understood in the context of democratic policing. This thesis does not treat trust in the police as an inherently positive disposition that should always increase. In democratic policing, trust is a relationship built on fair treatment and accountability. Lower trust can be a reasonable reaction in the event of unfair practices or the disregard of the experiences of particular groups. Goldsmith (2005) similarly argues that trust in the police is fragile and context-dependent. Therefore, the

implication of this thesis is not that citizens should trust the police more under all circumstances, but rather that police institutions should create the conditions that justify trust.

The lack of a significant effect of perceived police effectiveness on the intention to cooperate indicates that cooperation cannot be explained solely by performance evaluations. The current study shows that cooperation is shaped primarily around perceived procedural justice and trust. Indeed, Huq et al. (2011) found that, in a British Muslim sample in Greater London, concerns about procedural justice were stronger predictors of cooperation than evaluations of police efficacy or terrorism threat. Kochel et al. (2013) argue that in certain contexts characterised by high crime, corruption, and security concerns, police effectiveness may become a more important factor for cooperation. The fact that police effectiveness is not a significant predictor in the current model suggests that its influence may vary depending on the context, including local perceptions of safety and police performance.

A notable finding of Model I concerns the multi-dimensional role of self-censorship on social media in these relationships. The findings show that self-censorship on social media had a positive indirect effect in the relationship between perceived procedural justice and trust and intention to cooperate. In contrast, it had a negative indirect effect in the relationship between perceived police effectiveness and intention to cooperate. These opposing directions indicate that self-censorship cannot be interpreted as a sign of withdrawal. On social media, context collapse and imagined audiences may lead users to evaluate more carefully what they share and which topics they choose to withhold (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Self-censorship can be understood as a form of expression management through which individuals take possible misunderstandings and social risks into account.

Perceived social media affordances did not mediate the relationship between perceptions of policing and the intention to cooperate with the police in this model. However, additional SEM analyses revealed that perceived interaction affordance had a significant direct effect on intention to cooperate with the police, indicating that perceived opportunities for interaction are associated with cooperation intention. Bullock et al. (2021) note that in the UK police–community engagement context,

social media provides new communication opportunities, but citizen engagement does not necessarily follow. Its development depends on how these technologies are used and the institutional context in which they are embedded. In this sense, the results of Model I suggest that social media is relevant to police cooperation when users perceive it as enabling interaction.

Overall, the Policing Perceptions and Digitally Mediated Cooperation Model shows that cooperation with the police cannot be understood solely as an extension of general evaluations of the police. Procedural justice and trust remain the central basis of cooperation intention. However, the social media environment changes how this intention should be interpreted. Users do not encounter police-related communication as passive recipients. They interpret it through the possibilities for expression and interaction provided by social media.

6.2.2. Digital Control Mechanisms and Police Cooperation Model

The Digital Control Mechanisms and Police Cooperation Model further develops the thesis's digital focus by examining how perceived control and perceived surveillance on social media relate to the intention to cooperate with the police and digital efficacy. In the model, perceived social media affordances and self-censorship on social media were included as mediating variables. The findings showed a significant positive direct effect of perceived control on both intention to cooperate with the police and digital efficacy. This result suggests that individuals who perceive themselves as having control over their social media use may view contact with the police and acting effectively with others in digital environments as more feasible. Perceived surveillance, however, did not have a significant direct effect on intention to cooperate with the police, though it had a positive indirect effect via interaction affordance and a direct positive effect on digital efficacy.

These results indicate that, in Model II, perceived control on social media is associated with individuals' perceptions of their ability to regulate their own behaviour and posts in online environments. As this perception strengthens, individuals may see cooperating with the police as more feasible and feel more confident in their ability to act effectively with others in digital spaces. Accordingly, perceived control emerges

as a factor that reduces uncertainty for both cooperation intention and digital efficacy. O'Connor and Zaidi (2021) note that the presence of police on social media can create expectations of accessibility and responsiveness among citizens. In this context, perceived control on social media may make cooperation with the police appear less risky and more manageable.

Perceived surveillance on social media presents differentiated findings in terms of direct and indirect relationships in Model II. This variable did not show a significant direct effect on intention to cooperate with the police, but it had a positive indirect effect via perceived interaction affordance. It also had a significant positive direct effect on digital efficacy. These findings indicate that the sense of being monitored does not directly reduce the intention to cooperate with the police, but instead operates indirectly through interaction affordance. Lyon's surveillance culture approach emphasises that surveillance can become a condition that individuals adapt to and negotiate, rather than an externally imposed pressure in everyday digital life (Lyon, 2017). The lack of a direct negative effect of perceived surveillance in Model II suggests that being aware of surveillance did not just discourage cooperation. Instead, its effect was connected to whether users perceived social media as a space where interaction with others was possible.

Dencik et al. (2015) show that the use of social media data has gained importance as an open-source intelligence resource in protest and public order processes within UK policing. At the same time, social media allows citizens to record police-public encounters and to expose police conduct to public scrutiny (Walsh & O'Connor, 2019). This dual nature offers a useful explanation for why perceived surveillance does not directly reduce intention to cooperate with the police, even as it remains positively associated with digital efficacy in this study. For this reason, surveillance in this model should be considered a digital experience in which users evaluate both opportunities and risks when acting online.

In Model II, perceived interaction affordance acts as a mediator between perceived control, perceived surveillance, and both intention to cooperate with the police and digital efficacy. This finding indicates that the perceived ability to act collectively on social media is linked to the capacity to interact with others and receive

responses. Brainard and Edlins (2015) note that police departments' activity on social media and citizens' responses to these posts are not sufficient to create strong reciprocal interaction or collaboration, as police agencies often do not sustain these conversations. This supports the interpretation that interaction affordance helps explain the effects of perceived control and perceived surveillance on cooperation intention and digital efficacy in Model II.

Self-censorship on social media did not mediate the relationships between perceived control, perceived surveillance, and either intention to cooperate with the police or digital efficacy in Model II. Compared with Model I, this finding suggests that self-censorship was relevant in the policing perceptions model, but did not play an explanatory role in the digital control model. In this context, digital efficacy strengthens the model by capturing users' perceived capacity to collaborate effectively with others on social media.

6.3. New Directions in Policing: Empirical and Theoretical Contributions

This thesis examines police–community cooperation in the UK context by considering the role of digital perceptions and offers both empirical and theoretical contributions to the policing literature. The findings indicate that perceptions of policing remain important for understanding citizens' intention to cooperate with the police, but this relationship should also be considered alongside digital perceptions formed in social media environments. In this regard, the thesis examines police–community cooperation together with perceived control, perceived surveillance, perceived social media affordances, and self-censorship on social media. The concept of digital efficacy is developed as a distinctive contribution for understanding individuals' perceived ability to act effectively with others online.

The empirical contribution of Model I lies in examining police–community cooperation alongside self-censorship on social media. This model shows that intention to cooperate with the police does not necessarily involve open or critical forms of online expression. The findings reveal that self-censorship on social media can operate in different directions across different relationships, indicating that this variable cannot be interpreted as operating in a single direction in relation to police

cooperation. Therefore, Model I contributes to the policing literature by showing that citizens' intention to cooperate with the police should be interpreted more carefully when it is examined alongside self-censorship on social media.

Model II examines perceived control and perceived surveillance on social media in relation to police cooperation intention and digital efficacy, adding a social media-based explanation to the policing literature. The findings indicate that individuals' perceived ability to interact on social media is important for understanding how perceived control and surveillance relate to police cooperation and digital efficacy. Therefore, this model contributes by demonstrating that perceptions of control, surveillance, and interaction affordance on social media can be examined within the same framework in studies of police–community cooperation.

The theoretical contribution of this thesis lies in applying the governmentality approach to rethink police–community cooperation in the context of social media. This framework allows the interpretation of citizens' intention to cooperate with the police alongside perceptions shaped by social media. In this way, social media is approached as more than a space for communication between the police and the public; it is an environment in which cooperation intention can be shaped. Accordingly, the thesis discusses cooperation intention in the policing literature as a process situated in a digitally contextualised environment.

Digital efficacy is one of the thesis's original conceptual contributions. This construct enables the empirical examination of individuals' perceived ability to act effectively with others in social media contexts. Police cooperation intention captures an institution-oriented form of cooperation, whereas digital efficacy captures users' assessments of their collective capacity to pursue shared goals on social media. This distinction strengthens the social media dimension of the study by conceptualising social media as a space of police communication, public interaction, and perceived collective capacity.

6.3.1. Reframing Collective Efficacy in the Digital Sphere

This section explains the thesis's core conceptual contribution by relating the concept of digital efficacy to the discussion of collective efficacy. Collective efficacy is

typically conceptualised at the neighbourhood level, through social cohesion among neighbours and expectations of informal social control (Sampson et al., 1997; Yesberg & Bradford, 2021). Digital efficacy, by contrast, is not developed as a direct transfer of this concept to social media, but as a way of understanding individuals' assessments of their ability to act effectively together in platform-mediated environments. On social media, users can respond to shared issues and act collectively without being in the same physical space or belonging to the same local community.

Digital efficacy is related to discussions of internet self-efficacy and social capital, but it remains conceptually distinct from both. The literature on internet self-efficacy focuses on individuals' confidence in what they can accomplish online, whereas social capital literature emphasises online connections, network resources, and supportive relationships (Eastin & LaRose, 2000; Ellison et al., 2007). Digital efficacy, in contrast, refers to users' perceptions of their ability to act together with others through social media, to come together around shared goals, and to produce collective impact. In other words, digital efficacy concerns the extent to which users perceive collective action online as feasible.

Model II demonstrates that digital efficacy should be understood in relation to perceived control, perceived surveillance, and perceived social media affordances in social media environments. Perceived control is associated with users' perceptions that their online behaviours and posts are manageable. The significant direct effect of perceived surveillance on digital efficacy indicates that perceptions of collective capacity can also emerge when users feel monitored. The direct effects of perceived interaction and association affordances show that this capacity is supported by the ability to make contact and build connections. In this context, digital efficacy is shaped by users' perceptions of control and surveillance, as well as by the opportunities they perceive for interaction and association on social media.

One distinctive feature of digital efficacy is that it emerges within a surveillance culture. The perception of acting collectively on social media is not independent of the sense of being monitored. Lyon's surveillance culture approach emphasises that surveillance can become a condition that users encounter and adapt to in everyday digital life (Lyon, 2018). In this study, the positive relationship between perceived

surveillance and digital efficacy indicates that users can assess their ability to act and interact with others on social media even when they feel observed.

Digital efficacy does not treat social media as a space that is either directly liberating or entirely constraining. In this respect, digital efficacy can be considered a concept that explains how collective capacity is understood on social media. Therefore, the study situates digital efficacy alongside police cooperation intention within the same digital model, offering a conceptual basis for examining users' perceived ability to act effectively together on social media.

6.4. Recommendations for Platform Designers and Police

This section discusses the practical implications of the findings from the two models for police and platform design. The findings indicate that intention to cooperate with the police is shaped by citizens' perceptions of the police and by how clear and manageable online interaction processes appear. Even if people hold positive views of the police, they may approach cooperation cautiously if the outcomes of online interactions seem uncertain or risky. Therefore, the key issue for police institutions and platform designers is to clarify what citizens can communicate through which channels and how the information they share will be handled.

For police, a main recommendation is to establish low-risk and predictable interaction channels without limiting social media communication to one-way announcements. Users should be able to clearly see whether their messages reach the correct unit, under what circumstances they will receive a response, and which matters will be redirected to other channels. This type of clarity is particularly important for users who are cautious in social media interactions but still open to cooperation. West Yorkshire Police's 16 Days of Action campaign provides an example by using short narrative videos to raise awareness about domestic violence and encourage people around victims to talk and seek help (OPCC, 2018). Fearless Scotland's sextortion campaign, developed together with young people, is also a useful example of involving the target audience in message design (Fearless Scotland, 2025). These two examples demonstrate that police communication depends not only on message content, but also on how messages are designed for specific target audiences.

For platform designers, the main recommendation is to develop designs that make interaction and reporting processes on social media more predictable for users. The goal is not to multiply control options, but to ensure that users can understand what these options and platform procedures may involve. When users understand how processes work, they may perceive the social media environment as more manageable. However, increasing transparency about processes may not necessarily enhance users' sense of control. Providing information about data processing and algorithmic evaluation may also lead some users to feel monitored by the platform. Design should help users regulate their online behaviour consciously by understanding how platform processes operate.

Reporting and content moderation processes could also be reconsidered. Rather than simply confirming receipt of a report, platforms should indicate what happens next and, where possible, explain the basis for the decision. Jhaver et al. (2019) show that providing explanations for content removal decisions is associated with users perceiving the decision as fairer and being more willing to post again in the future. This finding suggests that feedback can improve users' understanding of content moderation. In addition, users need to understand how to appeal decisions and how to act in similar situations. Therefore, platform design should provide users with a transparent, accountable communication structure that explains the rationale behind decisions and their implications for users.

Overall, the shared goal for police and platform designers is to make social media communication safe and sustainable. Police institutions should create trustworthy communication channels, while platform designers can help ensure that users experience interactions within these channels in an understandable and predictable way. The quality of interaction processes and how they are experienced should be monitored regularly. Indicators such as response times, unanswered submissions, referral processes, complaint resolution, and trust in the communication channel may be included in this assessment. In this way, social media communication can support an accountable cooperation process in which individuals understand clearly what they can do and what they can expect.

6.5. Future Research and Limitations

One limitation of this study concerns the distribution of the sample within the UK. Although the study was conducted in the UK context, the low level of participation from Wales and Northern Ireland limits the generalisability of the findings to all countries that constitute the UK and restricts reliable comparisons across the four countries. In addition, the limited ethnic diversity of the sample and the fact that the majority of participants identified as White make it difficult to assess whether the findings apply in the same way to different ethnic groups. Future studies may examine how these findings vary across different social groups by using samples with more balanced subsample sizes across the four countries and more diverse ethnic groups.

Another limitation is that the study is based on cross-sectional survey data. SEM analysis made it possible to test direct and indirect paths between variables. However, these paths are not sufficient to establish definite causality between the variables. The findings indicate structural relationships between the variables, but they do not reveal which variable affects another over time or how this influence occurs. Future research may use longitudinal or experimental designs to examine how the relationships between variables develop over time.

In this study, the perceived procedural justice and perceived trust items merged into a single dimension in the factor analysis. In addition, perceived police legitimacy was not supported as a separate construct. The purpose of using a multi-item trust scale was to measure trust in the police in a comprehensive and reliable way. However, these results show that multi-item measures do not always guarantee conceptual separation. Therefore, future studies may consider more carefully the balance between multi-item scales and shorter trust measures. Future studies should also pay attention to how clearly items distinguish between procedural justice, trust, and legitimacy. In addition, perceived police effectiveness may be measured through subdimensions such as crime-fighting capacity and response speed.

The perceived data justice items were excluded from the structural model because they did not produce sufficiently strong factor loadings. The low factor loadings may reflect

the difficulty of translating an abstract and relatively unfamiliar concept into survey items. Future studies could address this limitation by operationalising data justice through concrete, scenario-based or practice-oriented items, such as separate questions about how police departments or platforms collect and process social media data. Perceived control on social media measures users' perceived control over their online behaviour, not actual technical control. In particular, items concerning whether personal information can be accessed without consent may reflect participants' normative expectations about how personal data should be protected rather than their perceived control over their personal information. Future research may examine perceived control in more detail by separating it into subdimensions such as privacy settings, content visibility, and reporting control.

The perceived surveillance on social media measure captured a general feeling of being monitored. This measure did not distinguish between different sources of surveillance, such as commercial data mining, platform surveillance, government surveillance, or police surveillance. Individuals' perceptions of being monitored on social media may be based on different actors and institutional contexts. The results reflect a general perception of social media surveillance. However, they do not separately explain how this perception is shaped by commercial platforms or police-related data use. Future studies may use more detailed measures that distinguish the source and type of surveillance.

The social media affordances measured in this study refer to users' perceptions of these possibilities. The fact that social media affordances did not play a mediating role in every relationship indicates that these possibilities are not perceived in the same way by users in every context. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted at the level of perceived social media affordances. This suggests a need for further research on why users attach different meanings to different affordances. Future research may use qualitative methods and platform-comparative research designs to examine how users perceive and experience social media affordances across different platforms.

Finally, because digital efficacy is a concept developed and empirically tested in this thesis, it should be revalidated in future research. This validation may include

examining the concept's validity across different platforms and social issues. Future studies may examine how digital efficacy operates in different areas of digital collective action, such as political participation and crisis communication. This would help assess its measurement validity and explanatory power across different digital contexts.

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