

Usman Afzali, PhD (Psyc), MD

Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Lecturer (Teaching and Admin)
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GitHub [usman-afzali](#)

Employment

2023→	University of Canterbury	Postdoctoral Research Fellow [Muslim Diversity Study]
2023→	University of Canterbury	Lecturer (Teaching and Admin) [Neuroscience (postgraduate)]
2022→ 2024	University of Canterbury	Lecturer (Teaching and Admin) [Research Methods (undergraduate)]
2022	University of Canterbury	Postdoctoral Research Associate [Computational Neuroscience]
2021→2022	Victoria University of Wgtn	Research Assistant
2018→2022	University of Canterbury	Teaching Assistant→Teaching Assistant Coordinator →Guest Lecturer→Lecturer (Teaching only)
	<i>Postgraduate Courses:</i>	Cognitive Psychology, Forensic Psychology, Advanced Research Methods & Statistics
	<i>Undergraduate Courses:</i>	Cognition, Social Psychology, Intermediate Research Methods & Statistics, Introductory Research Methods & Statistics, Introductory Psychology

Fields of Research

Psychology of Religion, Human Flourishing, Contemplative Neuroscience, Cognitive Psychology:
Memory control, Forensic Neuroscience.

Education

2022	University of Canterbury, PhD in Psychology
2018	University of Canterbury, BSc with First Class Honours in Psychology
2017	University of Canterbury, BSc in Psychology
2009	Shaikh Zayed University, MD in Curative Medicine

Awards

2022	UC Foundation Doctoral Publication Prize (1,000 NZD)
2022	SPR Free Membership
2022	Georgina Carvell Memorial Prize (5,000 NZD)
2019	Te Puna Toiora Scholarship (2,500 NZD)
2019	University of Canterbury Doctoral Scholarship (21,000 NZD p.a. plus tuition for 3 years)
2018	Stage 4 Psychology Prize
2017	Stage 3 Psychology Prize (250 NZD)

Grants

Principal Investigator

2023

U. Afzali (PI): **TRT-2022-30579 “A national longitudinal study of Muslim diversity and flourishing, aka Muslim Diversity Study”** Templeton Religion Trust, NZD 406,021 (University of Canterbury).

Publications

(Citations: 90, h-index: 6, i10-index: 5; [Google Scholar](#), Jul, 2024)

2023

10. Bulbulia, J. A., **Afzali, M. U.**, Yogeeswaran, K., and Sibley, C. G. (2023). Long-term causal effects of far-right terrorism in New Zealand. *PNAS Nexus*, 2(8). <https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgad242>
9. **Afzali, M. U.**, Jones, R. D., Seren-Grace, A. P., Palmer, R. W., Makarios, D., Rodrigues, M. N. B., and Neumann, E. (2023). Classification accuracy of the ERP-based Brain Fingerprinting and its robustness to direct-suppression and thought-substitution countermeasures. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 37(3), 480-495. <https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.4050>

2022

8. **Afzali, M. U.**, Seren-Grace, A. P., Palmer, R. W., Neumann, E., Makarios, S., Wilson, D., and Jones, R. D. (2022). Detection of concealed knowledge via the ERP-based technique *Brain Fingerprinting*: Real-life and real-crime incidents. *Psychophysiology*, 00:e14110, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1111/psyp.14110>
7. Byrne, K., Yogeeswaran, K., Dorahy, M. J., Gale, J., **Afzali, M. U.**, Bulbulia, J. A., Sibley, C. G. (2022). Psychological impact of far-right terrorism against Muslim minorities on national distress, community, and wellbeing. *Scientific Reports*. 12, 1620. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-05678-x>

2021

6. Shanaah, S., Yogeeswaran, K., Greaves, L., Bulbulia, J. A., Osborne, D., **Afzali, M. U.**, & Sibley, C. G. (2021). Hate begets warmth? The impact of an anti-Muslim terrorist attack on public attitudes toward Muslims. *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2021.1877673>
5. Rucklidge, J. J., **Afzali, M. U.**, Kaplan, B. J., Bhattacharya, O., Blampied, M. F., Mulder, R. T., & Blampied, N. M. (2021). Massacre, Earthquake, Flood: Translational science evidence that the use of micronutrients post-disaster reduces the risk of post-traumatic stress in survivors of disasters. *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation*. 10, 39–54. <https://doi.org/10.1027/2157-3891/a000003>

2020

4. **Afzali, M. U.**, Bustos, J. V. C., & Kemp, S. (2020). Perception of financial satisfaction and its implications for free first-year education in New Zealand university students. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 49(2), 4–14. ([url](#)).
3. Sibley, C. G., **Afzali, M. U.**, Satherley, N., Ejova, A., Stronge, S., Yogeeswaran, K., ... Bulbulia, J. (2020). Prejudice toward Muslims in New Zealand: Insights from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 49(1), 48–72. ([url](#))
2. Blampied, N. M., Mulder, R. T., **Afzali, M. U.**, Bhattacharya, O., Blampied, M., & Rucklidge, J. J. (2020). Disasters, policies and micronutrients: the intersect among ethics, evidence and effective action. *New Zealand Medical Journal*, 133(1508), 8–11. ([url](#)).

2019

1. Yogeeswaran, K., **Afzali, M. U.**, Andrews, N. P., Chivers, E. A., Wang, M.-J., Devos, T., & Sibley, C. G. (2019). Exploring New Zealand National Identity and Its Importance for Attitudes toward Muslims and Support for Diversity. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 48(1), 29–35. ([url](#)).

Dissertation

Afzali, M. U. (2022). *Suppressing unwanted memories and thoughts: Psychological traits and forensic brainwave investigations*. PhD thesis, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, NZ. <http://dx.doi.org/10.26021/13084>

Supervision

Ongoing

- 2024→ A. Bello. *PhD Data Science*. Effects of interaction with a dog on the brain and non-brain activity using mobile brain/body imaging (MoBI). [Associate supervisor].
- 2024→ J. Badis. *BA Hons Psychology*. Predictors of Islamophobia in New Zealand: Findings from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study. [**Primary supervisor**].
- 2023→ K. Johnson. *PhD Psychology*. Biomarkers for Early Dementia: Memory suppression, language comprehension and EEG. [Co-supervisor].

Completed

- 2023→ 2024 N. Shadbolt. *BA Hons Psychology*. The Effects of Partial Sleep Deprivation on Memory Suppression. [Secondary supervisor].
- 2023 H. Grace. *BA Hons Psychology*. The Construction and Validation of The Contemplative Experience Scale. [**Primary supervisor**].
- 2023 R. Heaton. *BA Hons Psychology*. Investigating the Effects of Sleep Deprivation on Memory Suppression Tasks. [Secondary supervisor].
- 2022 K. Johnson. *BSc Hons Psychology*. Testing the Think/No-Think Effect with Same and Independent Cues: Conditionalised Versus Unconditionalised Recall. [Secondary supervisor].
- 2022 P. Theobald. *BSc Hons Psychology*. Actively Forgetting Unwanted Memories: An Inhibitory Account of the Think No/Think Paradigm. [Secondary supervisor].
- 2022 J. Auckram. *BSc Hons Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington*. Powering Through Struggles: Resilience of Muslim Women in Ōtautahi/Christchurch During Covid-19 Lockdowns. [Research mentor].
- 2021→2022 D. Matchett. *MSc Psychology*. Memory Suppression under Sleep Deprivation: The Effects of Sleep Loss and Sleep Time on Suppressing Unwanted Memories. [Secondary supervisor].
- 2021 J. Lynskey. *BSc Hons Psychology*. Memory Suppression in Those Susceptible to PTSD - A Study Adopting the Think/No-Think Paradigm. [Secondary supervisor].
- 2021 J. Newlands. *BSc Hons Psychology*. Does OCD Impact One's Ability to Actively Suppress Memories? A Think/No-Think Paradigm Study. [Secondary supervisor].

Research Projects

- 2024→ Enablers and challengers of collecting data from Muslim community in Aotearoa New Zealand: An in-depth qualitative exploration of research assistant experiences using NVivo and Copilot
- 2023→ [A National Longitudinal Study of Muslim Diversity and Flourishing \(Muslim Diversity Study\)](#)
- 2023→ Artificial Intelligence-Based Crime Detection in Aotearoa: Real-life and Virtual Reality Applications
- 2022→ [Resting EEG Microstates During Contemplative Practices](#)
- 2022→ Spiritual Care in New Zealand Healthcare
- 2022→ [Controlling Unwanted Memories: A Multisite Registered Replication of the Think/No-Think Effect](#)
- 2019→2020 Post-trauma Micronutrients Intervention ([Te Puna Toiora](#))

2018→2022 Brain Fingerprinting Independent Replication
2017→2018 New Zealand Tertiary Students' Financial Stress

Presentations, Panel Discussions & Talks

2024^l [Quarto Crash Course](#) (lecture). PAST Society, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. 18 July 2024.

2024^p What does science mean to me? (panel). [SCIE101 \(Science, Society and Me\)](#). University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. 17 July 2024.

2024^t Belonging and Exclusion: The Psychology of Identity Crisis in a Diverse World (public lecture). University of Canterbury Muslim Students Association, Christchurch, New Zealand. 31 May 2024.

2024^p [Exploring Muslim Diversity in New Zealand: Insights from the Muslim Diversity Study and NZAVS](#) (research presentation). University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. 2 May 2024.

2024^d Unity Summit - Unity Week NZ (panel discussion). Christchurch Multicultural Recreation and Community Centre, Christchurch, New Zealand. 15 March 2024.

2024^d Peace Week 2024 - Panel Discussion and Launch Event (panel discussion). The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. 10 March 2024.

2024^t [Do We Have an Identity Problem?](#) (public lecture). The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. 09 March 2024.

2024^t [Five Years After March 15](#) (public lecture). [CACR](#), Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand. 26 February 2024.

2023^t [Long-term Effects of Far-Right Terrorism on Muslims in New Zealand](#) (public lecture). [CARE](#), Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand. 17 Nov 2023.

2023^t Suffering in Silence: Navigating Grief from Psychological and Islamic Perspectives (invited talk). An-Nur Mosque, Christchurch, New Zealand. 11 Nov 2023.

2023^t Journey from Medicine to Academia: Navigating Challenges and Advocating for Change (invited talk). Afghanistan Independence Day 2023 Event, Afghan Association of New Zealand. Auckland, New Zealand. 21 Aug 2023.

2022^p Behavioural Evidence of Suppression-induced Forgetting and its Interaction with Psychological Traits (research presentation). School of Psychology, Speech and Hearing, University of Canterbury. Jun 2022.

2021^p Brain Fingerprinting with Parolees and Brain Fingerprinting Countermeasures (research presentation). School of Psychology, Speech and Hearing, University of Canterbury. 03 Dec 2021.

2021^p Brain Fingerprinting: Replication and Countermeasures (research presentation). [New Zealand Psychological Society Annual Conference](#). 05 - 07 Sep 2021.

2021^t Navigating Challenges: Immigrant Youth in New Zealand (invited talk). Afghan Association of New Zealand Youth Networking Conference. Auckland, New Zealand. 01 Aug 2021.

2021^p Detection of Concealed Knowledge via the ERP-based Technique Brain Fingerprinting: Real-crime Scenarios (research presentation). [Australasian Society for Experimental Psychology Annual Conference](#). 09 - 11 Apr 2021.

2021^d Navigating the New Zealand Work Environment as an Immigrant (panel discussion). School of Law Graduands Panel, University of Canterbury. Christchurch, New Zealand. 29 Mar 2021.

Professional Training

2024 Working With Students In Distress Workshop (University of Canterbury)

2023 MATLAB for Neuroscience (University of Canterbury)

2022 Git & GitHub with RStudio (edX and Udemy)

2022 R, Essential, Basics and Advanced training (LinkedIn Learning)

2022 Academic Development for lecturers (University of Canterbury)

2022 EEGLab - The Matlab toolbox for EEG and MEG data processing

2022 [Causal Diagrams: Draw Your Assumptions Before Your Conclusions](#) (edX Harvard)

2021 Python: Basics of programming, data analysis, data visualisation (edX IBM)

2021 Meta-Analysis (University of Canterbury)

2021 Tutor and Demonstrator Training (University of Canterbury)
2020 Teaching in Academia Workshop (University of Canterbury)

Professional Affiliations

2022→2023 [Society for Psychophysiological Research](#): Member
2022→ [Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research](#): Associate
2020→ [UC Meta](#): Member
2019→ [New Zealand Psychological Society](#): Member

Skills

Academic Applied frequentist statistics, teaching, research (conducting & supervision)
Technical R, Quarto, Git, Python, MATLAB, SPSS, Jamovi, L^AT_EX, Qualtrics, EEGLab

Service

2024 Judge, Three Minute Thesis. ([SPSH](#), [UC](#))
2024→ Chair, Staff-Student Liaison Committee ([SPSH](#), [UC](#))
2024→ Co-Producer, Psyched! The New Zealand Psychology Podcast. ([SPSH](#), [UC](#))
2023→ Academic Programme Co-convenor, [New Zealand Psychological Society Annual Conference - 2024](#)
2023→ Vice President, Muslim Health Council Aotearoa
2023→ 2024 Research Assistant, School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington
2023→ Peer Reviewer: Funding agency (e.g., HRC NZ) and academic journals
2021 Academic Rep, Postgraduate Society ([SPSH](#), [UC](#))
2020 Founder, Postgraduate Society ([SPSH](#), [UC](#))
2020→ Member, School Marketing Committee ([SPSH](#), [UC](#))
2020→ 2021 Administrator, School's social media platforms ([SPSH](#), [UC](#))
2020 Founder, School's social media platforms ([SPSH](#), [UC](#))
2019 Contributor, Royal Commission Submission on Post-15 March Terrorist Attacks (The Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand)
2019 Founder, Social Hour (Facilitating socialization in the postgraduate community) ([SPSH](#), [UC](#))
2018→ 2021 Member, Postgraduate Council ([SPSH](#), [UC](#))
2018→ 2019 Phone Counsellor, Lifeline Aotearoa
2016→ Volunteer Imam (Prayers Lead), University of Canterbury Muslim Students Association

Languages

Pashto	● ● ● ● ●
Farsi/Persian	● ● ● ● ●
English	● ● ● ● ●
Hindi and Urdu	● ● ● ● ●
Arabic	● ● ● ● ●

Other

Citizenship New Zealand
Advocacy Preregistration, Open Science, E-learning
Interests History, Historical Period Drama, Islamic Civilization, Nature and Wildlife

Referees

Available on request.