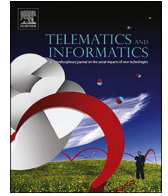


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## Correlation between university students' online trolling behavior and online trolling victimization forms, current conditions, and personality traits

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## ABSTRACT

Few studies have specifically examined online trolling behavior and the forms and current conditions of online trolling victimization that may develop among university students, as well as the correlation of these to personality traits. The valid sample included 285 university students, with 80.6% and 19.3% being male and female, respectively. The research results are: 1. Online trolling behavior is more common in those who more frequently post text information on Facebook than those who do not; 203 (71.2%) and 211 (74.0%) experienced at least 1 instance of online trolling behavior or being an online trolling victim, respectively, in the previous week; 2. University students' online trolling behavior types are ranked by quantity as evocative trolling, malicious trolling, obstruction trolling, and pathological trolling; 3. University students' online trolling victimization types are ranked by quantity as identity victimization, dissemination victimization, malicious victimization, and obstruction victimization; 4. Sense of inferiority is a significant predictive variable for online trolling behavior and online trolling victimization. At the same time, social extraversion and depression significantly and positively predict online trolling behavior. Based on the foregoing results, the study proposed discussion and recommendations for university students and future research.

The earliest term for trolling referred to a method of fishing, with people dragging bait behind a boat to attract fish ([Oxford English Dictionary, 2015](#)). In fairy tales, a troll was a monster that hid under bridges to scare and lunge at unknown passers-bys ([Ansong et al., 2013](#); [Herring et al., 2002](#)). [Donath \(1999\)](#) was the first to see trolling behavior as a personal identity fraud game (p. 45). If trolling behavior is applied to the Internet context, then online trolling can broadly refer to hiding in the Internet environment to utilize hot-button issues to make other Internet users become excessively emotional or stupid, or to intentionally anger others to get emotional responses from them, or to oppose other Internet users with predictable or unpredictable behaviors; if someone falls into the trap, then the troll(s) become even more extreme ([Buckels et al., 2014](#); [Griffiths, 2014](#); [Morrissey, 2010](#)). However, there are few studies in the literature covering specific behavioral features, types, and frequencies of online trolling behavior, and there are no systematic analyses of online trolling victimization. Therefore, this study used retrospective methods to analyze possible online trolling behavior and online trolling victimization for university students in the previous week, in order to clarify their concepts of online trolling behavior and online trolling victimization, employing this as a basis of reference and direction to understand and handle online trolling behavior of university students in the future.

Past studies have found that online trolling behavior may appear in all ages and backgrounds ([Hardaker, 2013](#)), but younger men

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are more likely to exhibit online trolling behavior (Thacker and Griffiths, 2012). An online survey of 2000 adolescents in the age range of 14–18 years showed that 1/3 of adolescents engaged in online trolling in the last six months, and 1/10 admitted that they were trolls (Rice, 2013). This shows that online trolling behavior may appear more frequently in young male high school students, yet because university students more frequently use the Internet, they may also be a high-risk group for online trolling behavior. Therefore, this study explored this phenomenon with the university students as the sample. In online interaction in non-mainstream online environments, including Wikipedia (Shachaf and Hara, 2010), feminist forums (Balka, 1993; Herring et al., 2002), and gaming worlds (Thacker and Griffiths, 2012), and platforms that allow groups to interact, post information, and chat, such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, and Instagram (Ansong et al., 2013), online users are more susceptible to harm from trolling behavior. In sum, factors such as gender, grade, and different online platforms may all affect online trolling behavior and online trolling victimization, which this study included in its consideration.

Researchers have proposed concepts and measurement tools for online trolling behavior and have further analyzed the relationships among Dark Tetrad (Buckels et al., 2014), self-esteem (Thacker and Griffiths, 2012), and online trolling behavior. However, few studies have empirically compiled a multifaceted measurement tool for online trolling behavior and online trolling victimization, or explored the relationships among online trolling behavior, online trolling victimization and social extraversion, unstable emotions, and unhealthy psychological characters. Results of this present study can further expand the field of online trolling behavior and online trolling victimization, which has been overlooked, and provide a preliminary exploration for future studies.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. The nature of online trolling behavior and online trolling victimization

Forms of online trolling behavior include irritating behavior, gender discrimination/racism, and intentional falsification and misleading claims (Thacker and Griffiths, 2012). More specifically, online trolls tend to deliberately post and disseminate provocative, offensive, incorrect, deliberately falsified, or apparently genuine information, and they may also engage in Internet abuse and design predictable flame wars, elicit pointless arguments, or use information incorrectly to make others devote themselves to useless, meaningless, and time-consuming discussions, even leading to negative behavioral responses or violent responses (Ansong et al., 2013, p. 42; Bishop, 2013; Buckels et al., 2014; Herring et al., 2002, p. 373; Morrissey, 2010). Aside from posting and disseminating information, online trolling behavior may include many Internet behaviors that interfere with other gaming interests (Griffiths, 2014). Adrian (2010) believed that a person who shows trolling behavior in online gaming could be considered a griefer; a troll in a game wants to obstruct team hunts or goals; and a troll can describe a person who wants to destroy the game. Since online trolling behavior is a form of cyberbullying (Griffiths, 2014; Morrissey, 2010), cyberbullies tend to have clearer identities and simpler intents (Lenhardt, 2013). Therefore, online trolling behavior in this study is an independent concept among these antisocial forms online.

In terms of tools to measure online trolling behavior, Buckels et al. (2014) compiled the Global Assessment of Internet Trolling (GAIT) scale with four categories of questions. Although the scale had satisfactory reliability, stressed trolling experiences and various preferences of trolling and identification with Internet subcultures, and proposed two scenarios of online text posts and game texts, it did not include common and diverse trolling characteristics, such as being hypocritical, antipathizing, deviating, cross-posting, annoying, and endangering (Ansong et al., 2013). Therefore, this study utilizes the two scenarios of online text posting and game text interaction to expand and deepen the dimensions of online trolling behavior in compiling an online trolling behavior scale. Furthermore, past studies have not used university students' perspectives to understand the current conditions and frequencies of online trolling victimization; thus, the study also compiles an online trolling victimization scale

### 2.2. Online trolling behavior, online trolling victimization, and personality

Online trolling behavior is a form of cyberbullying (Griffiths, 2014; Morrissey, 2010), and cyberbullies may have more antisocial personality traits (Fanti et al., 2012; Van Baardewijk et al., 2009) as well as greater narcissistic deprivation and hostile beliefs (Ang et al., 2011). Similarly, the noxious Dark Tetrad of personality is also significantly correlated to adolescent bullying activity (Fanti and Kimonis, 2013). Therefore, malicious abuse, Machiavellianism, neuroticism, and psychopathy, as parts of the Dark Tetrad, all show a significant positive correlation with online trolling (Buckels et al., 2014). One main reason for this may be that online trolls seek to be successful in provoking, attacking, lying to, sabotaging, and threatening other online users (Bishop, 2013; Buckels et al., 2014; Hardaker, 2010; Herring et al., 2002). On the other hand, online trolls and abusers all see the pain of others as their happiness in inflicting pain; these abusers want enjoyment and see the Internet as their playground (Buckels et al., 2014). Therefore, online trolling behavior may arise from boredom, seeking attention, entertainment, a desire to affect the social network, and deriving pleasure from harming websites and users (Shachaf and Hara, 2010; Thacker and Griffiths, 2012). This may mean that online trolls prefer to interact and chat with others online, but few studies have explored the correlations between online trolling behavior and online trolling victimization and extraversion, emotional instability, and unhealthy psychology. Based on the foregoing literature, this study believes that online trolling behavior and online trolling victimization may involve the personality traits of extraversion, unstable emotions, and poor psychological health.

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