



The dark side of Facebook®: The Dark Tetrad, negative social potency, and trolling behaviours



Naomi Craker^a, Evita March^{b,*}

^a Federation University, School of Health Science and Psychology, University Drive, Mt Helen, VIC 3350, Australia

^b Federation University, School of Health Science and Psychology, Northways Road, Churchill, VIC 3842, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 February 2016

Received in revised form 16 June 2016

Accepted 17 June 2016

Available online 2 July 2016

Keywords:

Trolling

Negative social potency

Narcissism

Machiavellianism

Psychopathy

Sadism

ABSTRACT

Trolling behaviours on social networking sites (SNSs) are problematic for other computer mediated communication users, as the psychological effects of experiencing trolling online are considered similar to the psychological effects of offline harassment. The current study explored personality traits and social motivations associated with individuals who engage in online trolling, specifically on the SNS Facebook®. The Dark Tetrad personality traits (i.e., narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism) and social reward (specifically, negative social potency) were examined for their predictive utility of trolling behaviours on Facebook®. A sample of 396 adults (75.9% women, 24.1% men) aged between 18 and 77 years of age ($M = 34.41$, $SD = 1.70$) completed the Global Assessment of Facebook® Trolling (GAFT), The Dirty Dozen, The Short Sadistic Impulse Scale, and The Social Rewards Questionnaire. Results showed that trait psychopathy and sadism predict Facebook® trolling behaviours; however, negative social potency had the strongest predictive utility. These results show that individual trolling behaviour may be better explained by negative social reward motivation than negative personality traits. In addition, these findings offer practical implications for SNS administrators and everyday users of SNSs. Future research should continue to explore predictors of this understudied antisocial online behaviour.

© 2016 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

1. Introduction

Trolling is an interpersonal antisocial behaviour prominent within Internet culture across the world. A form of online bullying and harassment (Pew Research Centre, 2014), common trolling behaviour includes starting aggressive arguments (Klempka & Stimson, 2013) and posting inflammatory malicious messages in online comment sections to deliberately provoke, disrupt, and upset others (Gammon, 2014). The attraction to be a 'troll' and engage in this type of online misconduct is enormous, with current statistics suggesting that over a quarter of Americans have engaged in trolling behaviour at one time or another (Gammon, 2014). Although still in its infancy, areas of academic research have begun to explore predictors of online misconduct including as cyber-bullying, identity theft, and cyberstalking. However, research focusing specifically on trolling has been very limited. The current study aimed to predict trolling behaviours on Facebook® from the Dark Tetrad personality traits (e.g., narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism). Furthermore, in addition to personality traits, the current study explored if negative social reward would also predict trolling behaviours.

1.1. Trolling, social media, and Facebook®

With over 3.2 billion people around the world actively accessing the Internet on a daily basis (International Telecommunication Union, 2015), the Internet has become an extension of our face-to-face world, where we engage in personal, social, and business interactions. Along with the positive social aspects of increased virtual opportunities to socialise and communicate, new and diverse antisocial behaviours have also emerged online (Williams, 2000). Although dependent on individual differences, online forms of antisocial behaviour (such as harassment) are associated with the same emotional and psychological outcomes as face-to-face forms harassment such as depression, social anxiety, and low levels of self-esteem (Nicol, 2012).

Facebook®, one of the most popular social media sites, has become the Internet's biggest playground for engaging in antisocial behaviours, particularly trolling (Pew Research Centre, 2014). The open access of Facebook® enables users to access the site and manipulate personal information for their own means and advantage, thus allowing trolling to occur very easily (Marwick & Ellison, 2012). Phillips (2011) suggests that trolls create anti-social networks on Facebook®, identifying themselves to other trolls on Facebook® by flagging their profile names and pictures with well-known trolling and internet references. However, current research on trolling behaviours on SNSs, specifically Facebook®, is fragmented, limited, and warrants further exploration.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: naomicraker@students.federation.edu.au (N. Craker), e.march@federation.edu.au (E. March).

1.2. Defining trolling behaviours

Due to the limited research conceptualising trolling behaviours, [Hardaker \(2010\)](#) conducted a content analysis on discussions about trolling behaviours by internet users that appeared on a non-centralised computer network for topical discussions. [Hardaker's \(2010\)](#) analysis identified four fundamental characteristics central to trolling behaviour: deception, aggression, disruption, and success.

Deception was noted by [Hardaker \(2010\)](#) as characteristically important to trolling behaviours, suggesting that people who engage in trolling often portray themselves differently on their 'trolling profile/s'. In addition, aggression was often used tactically by individuals that engage in trolling behaviour ([Hardaker, 2010](#)). By employing malicious taunts and provocative comments, trolls are able to annoy or emotionally provoke others into retaliating. Thirdly, individuals who engage in trolling are typically noted to employ what often seems to be meaningless disruptions aimed at attention-seeking and/or generating reactive responses from others ([Hardaker, 2010](#)). The combination of the characteristics of deception, aggression, and disruption leads to the fourth characteristic of trolling behaviours: success. [Hardaker \(2010\)](#) suggests that individuals who engage in this behaviour are motivated by the success in deceiving, aggravating, and disrupting the people they troll. If this success doesn't result, in that their provocative attempts are ignored or misplaced, the trolling individuals may increase and heighten their trolling attacks, or move on to new opportunities.

[Hardaker \(2010\)](#) also distinguished trolling behaviours from other forms of antisocial online misconduct. For example, the characteristics of deception and meaningless disruption unique to trolling distinguish this behaviour from cyber-bullying ([Lenhart, 2012](#)). Although trolling behaviours and cyber-bullying share aggressive attributes ([Dooley, Pyżalski, & Cross, 2010](#)), cyber-bullies are not characteristically deceptive or meaninglessly disruptive. Research on cyberbullying suggests quite the contrary; that cyber-bullies are often known to their victims in real life ([Dooley et al., 2010](#)), and the harassing behaviour involved in cyber-bullying is very direct and specifically targeted ([Steffgen, König, Pfetsch, & Melzer, 2011](#)). Thus, this suggests a distinct difference between trolling and cyberbullying.

1.3. Trolling behaviours: Personality and motivation

The domain of dark personality traits is an area of investigation relating to interpersonal online misconduct (e.g., [Nevin, 2015](#)), due to strong links between these traits and socially destructive and malevolent behaviours. Originally known as the Dark Triad of personality traits (e.g., narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism), the recent addition of everyday sadism has resulted in a Dark Tetrad constellation of personality ([Buckels, Jones, & Paulhus, 2013](#)). The Dark Tetrad are united by a handful of central characteristics, such as social manipulation, the drive for ruthless self-advancement, and most notably a lack of empathy (see [Buckels et al., 2013](#) for an indepth description of the Tetrad).

Although research on trolling behaviours is limited, recent research has identified associations between the Dark Tetrad and trolling behaviours ([Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014](#)). Specifically, the trait of everyday sadism was found to be the most robust when predicting trolling behaviours ([Buckels et al., 2014](#)). [Buckels et al. \(2014\)](#) highlight the significance of studying Dark Tetrad personality traits to further understand and profile trolls.

In addition to personality traits, it is also of interest to understand motivational factors that lead individuals to engage in trolling behaviours on Facebook®. In general terms, motivation to engage in any behaviour is determined by the outcomes, and individuals are reasonably more motivated to engage in behaviours that provide outcomes that are personally rewarding ([Deci & Ryan, 2000](#)). Thus, understanding the rewards valued by individuals that engage in trolling behaviours is central to a deeper understanding of what motivates people to troll. Given that the success of trolling behaviours is reliant on the

interaction with others, the social interaction of trolling behaviour may be significant motivational component. Therefore, the current study will explore social rewards that may motivate trolling behaviour.

Social rewards are conceptualised as typical or atypical, with typical social rewards defined as prosocial, socially accepted rewards and atypical social rewards as socially negative unaccepted forms of reward, commonly associated with selfish or self-serving behaviours and interaction ([Foulkes, Viding, McCrory, & Neumann, 2014](#)). [Foulkes, Viding, et al. \(2014\)](#) established six domains of social rewards, with five typical social rewards (e.g., Admiration, Passivity, Prosocial Interactions, Sexual Reward, and Sociability), and one atypical social reward (e.g., negative social potency). [Foulkes, Viding, et al. \(2014\)](#) proposed that each domain offered a unique set of associations with personality traits, social attitudes and goals.

[Foulkes, Viding, et al. \(2014\)](#) found negative social potency to be positively associated with Dark Triad personality traits (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy) and hostile interpersonal goals. This suggests that individuals who seek negative social potency are likely to enjoy inflicting psychological pain and distress onto others through exerting negative social influence, power, and strength ([Foulkes, Viding, et al., 2014](#)). Social reward, specifically negative social potency, offers a classification and acknowledgment of motivation to engage in face-to-face antisocial behaviours ([Foulkes, McCrory, Neumann, & Viding, 2014](#); [Foulkes, Viding, et al., 2014](#)). However, this type of social reward is yet to be explored in reference to Facebook® and SNS antisocial behaviour, such as trolling.

1.4. Aim and hypotheses

Further investigation of trolling behaviours on SNSs is warranted to create a more detailed character profile of individuals who engage in trolling behaviour. As such, the aim of this research project is to investigate the relationship between the Dark Tetrad (i.e., sadism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism) personality traits, social reward (specifically negative social potency) and Facebook® trolling behaviours. It is hypothesised, based on previous research, that higher levels of Dark Tetrad personality traits (i.e., narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism) will predict Facebook® trolling behaviours. In addition to the variance explained by Dark Tetrad traits, it is hypothesised that high levels of negative social potency will also predict Facebook® trolling behaviours.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 396 adults aged between 18 and 77 years of age (M age = 34.41, SD = 1.70). Of the sample, there were 296 (75.90%) women and 94 (24.10%) were men. To participate in the study, participants were required to be at least 18 years of age and have an active Facebook® account.

2.2. Materials

An online survey package provided to participants via SurveyMonkey included demographic questions (such as age and sex) and five measures: The Global Assessment of Facebook® Trolling, Social Rewards Questionnaire, The Dirty Dozen and The Short Sadistic Impulse Scale.

2.2.1. The Global Assessment of Facebook® Trolling

A modified and extended version of Global Assessment of Internet Trolling (GAIT; [Buckels et al., 2014](#)) was used to assess participants' trolling behaviour. For the purpose of the current study, the wording of the four item GAIT was modified to reflect Facebook® trolling, rather than internet trolling in general; e.g. 'I have sent people to shock

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/889658>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/889658>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)